

STRAIGHT TALK!

by

Craig Bolotin

Robert Chartoff Productions

Revised First Draft

August 19, 1983

...Furthermore, different people do
different things that may seem crazy
to other different people, but that
doesn't make it crazy-- it just makes
it different!

-- Judy Holliday
It Should Happen To You

BLACK SCREEN

MUSIC fades in, an extremely soft, scratchy recording of big band swing music: "Gotta Be This Or That."

FADE INTO:

MAIN STREET FERGUS FALLS

A very sleepy town in northern Minnesota: "Iron Capital Of the World." As the fast tempoed music continues we MOVE IN on the second of a two story brick building and a sign in imitation neon swirl:

ARTHUR MURRAY DANCE STUDIO

Minus the final O which has long since expired. The large steamed windows are partially open revealing slivers of brightly dressed dancers inside. The SWING MUSIC grows louder and we

CUT TO:

DOZENS OF DANCING STUDENTS, reflected in the chipped floor-to-ceiling mirrors -- retired millworkers, farmers, soldiers from a nearby army base, housewives, salesmen -- all trying to keep time with their INSTRUCTORS. The male teachers are in bright satin shirts and dark pants. The women in white blouses with A.M. scripted on their breast pockets, short skirts and silver, glittering high heels with ankle straps.

WE MOVE through this crowd of fumbling fox-trotters and speeding Rhumba dancers until we discover

A PAIR OF BROWN WING-TIPS

nudging a pair of silver heels, reflected ad infinitum in the mirror. A woman's mellifluous voice:

WOMAN (O.S.)

...Stay with me now -- two and three and rock, back, together, and...

MAN (O.S.)

So then she says, she says William, if that's how you feel I'd like a divorce.

ON SHIRLEY KENTON

teaching the American Swing to a stiff giant, BILL JOHNSON: middle-aged, leisure suit.

Shirley is an attractive instructor with a disarming smile and a sympathetic ear. She's lived in Fergus Falls all her life -- "Twice that long," she'd tell you. A small town girl but nobody's fool.

SHIRLEY

(forces Johnson feet apart with her toes. Not missing a beat)
Ummm...She really said that, huh?
(Johnson nods)
Three four now slide -- sliiide,
Mr. Johnson. Good. So what'd you say?

JOHNSON

I said okay...I said all right.

SHIRLEY

Well then?

Johnson draws Shirley close, practically suffocating her.

JOHNSON

After fourteen years, I guess I'm just afraid of being alone.

SHIRLEY

Let me out now -- Mr. Johnson.
Mr. Johnson, let me --

She spins out; he pulls her in like a yo-yo on a string.

SHIRLEY

Good... Well it seems a lot better than being with someone you don't love anymore -- together and rock, back, together and...

GUY GIRARDI, the manager in the loudest green suit you've ever seen is at the front desk on the phone. There is a young SOLDIER and an OLD WOMAN in a chiffon dress and red hat waiting for their lessons. Girardi glances up to see Shirley and Johnson who have stopped dancing. They're standing in the middle of the dance floor talking.

JOHNSON

(embarrassed)
God, I'm sorry for troublin' you with all this.

SHIRLEY

It's okay, come on, you gotta talk to someone about it, right?

Girardi arrives.

GIRARDI
Excuse us for a second.

He takes Shirley by the arm and leads her off.

GIRARDI
You're fifteen over again, Sugar.
I've got people waiting.

SHIRLEY
Mr. Johnson and I were just talking...

GIRARDI
You have someone waiting.

SHIRLEY
Well, sure, I know that, I know
that, but he's sorta distraught
and I can't leave him --

GIRARDI
Shirley.

She raises her hands above her head to surrender.

SHIRLEY
Okay, okay.

Girardi heads back toward the front desk. The second he's
out of hearing range Shirley turns back to Johnson and picks
up where she left off.

SHIRLEY
Have you moved out of the house yet?

CUT TO:

THE DANCE FLOOR, later. A STRAUSS WALTZ and everybody is
waltzing. Girardi is dancing with the Old Woman in the
chiffon dress and cardinal red hat. The crowd briefly
parts and he sees: Shirley. This time she's standing
by the wall consoling a young Soldier. He's looking down
at his shoes as he speaks to her. She squeezes his hand.

CUT TO:

GIRARDI'S OFFICE - LATER

Girardi behind his desk. Couples can be seen dancing
through the window in the wall. Shirley is leaning
against the glass, standing on one leg, the other cocked
back.

GIRARDI
Listen, you're a good-lookin' girl,
Shirley. A good dancer...a real angel.

SHIRLEY

Yeah, well I try.

GIRARDI

But I got a business to run here, and
you're always talking to the students.
...I just can't afford to lose the time this way.
You're startin' to cost me lessons.

Shirley switches the leg she's been standing on, then
switches right back. A nervous habit.

SHIRLEY

When Phil managed he never cared.
The students like it.

GIRARDI

Maybe they do, but I don't, Sugar.

SHIRLEY

I...I just feel it's part of the job.

GIRARDI

I know you do, I know you do...

Shirley bends over to adjust her ankle strap.

GIRARDI

...and that's why I'm letting you go.

SHIRLEY

(looks up)

Excuse me?

CUT TO:

A VERY STEEP HILL - NIGHT

Near the dance studio. It's drizzling...Shirley and LILLY,
another dance teacher are making their way down the hill
to their cars. Still in their silver high heels, they
have to take quick mincing steps to avoid falling. They
seem to be in perfect step with one another.

SHIRLEY

...That really burns me. Christ, he
could've warned me...

LILLY

Aw, don't take it personal.

Shirley looks at Lilly: how is she supposed to take it?

LILLY

Steve's still taking that
job in Chicago next month, right?
(Shirley nods)
Doll, I'd be doing somersaults.
At least you're getting out of
this town.

SHIRLEY

Yeah, but he's gonna be ticked off,
we could've used the extra money.

They reach the bottom of the hill. Shirley's going too
fast and has to grab a car doorhandle to stop herself.

LILLY

Hey, let's go to Pinks, have some
Bloody Marys and forget about it,
what do you say?

SHIRLEY

(checks her watch)
Oh God no. Rex and Judy are over.
I gotta run.

Shirley takes off, her heels clicking on the wet cement.

LILLY

(calling after her)
Shirley, just don't take it personal!

On Shirley mouthing "don't take it personal."

CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - COUNTY LINE ROAD - NIGHT

Shirley trying to manage an umbrella and a couple of six
packs of beer climbs up the steps to the small clapboard
house. One of the six packs splits open, the cans tumble
out. She flies down the steps, scoops the cans, then
races back up the steps and shoves the door open.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

As Shirley, soaked, steps in. Second hand furniture,
20 dollar oil paintings and a mantle cluttered with
bric-a-brac: fisherman's flies, quartz rocks, an old
Thunderbird steering wheel...

STEVE LABELL, Shirley's boyfriend is sitting on the couch
drinking Schlitz from the bottle. Next to him watching
Monday night football are JUDY and REX. Rex works with
Steve at Larson's Tool & Die.

SHIRLEY
 (hair dripping)
 Hi everyone. Sorry I'm late.

They all greet her warmly except for Steve. He's sour about something... A few beer cans slip from Shirley's arm and bounce across the floor. Shirley chases after them and scoops them up.

SHIRLEY
 I'll just put these in the fridge.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Shirley slams the refrigerator door, flies across the room, opens the cabinets, pulls out the plates, dashes to the sink... She's trying to do everything at once, including blotting her hair dry with a dish towel.

Steve walks in lighting his cigarette.

SHIRLEY
 Sorry I'm late, honey.

She sweeps past him, blotting her hair, yanks open the silverware drawer.

STEVE
 You uh, check the stew?

SHIRLEY
 (hurries past him, heels
 clicking on the linoleum)
 Not yet, honey, but I'm sure it's
 fine. It's been a good nine hours.

She puts one hand on top of the crock-pot. It's cold. She stops, puts both palms on top of it. Starts to fiddle with the switch.

SHIRLEY
 (baffled)
 It's on --

STEVE
 But not in.

Shirley spots the unplugged cord resting beneath the socket.

SHIRLEY
 (shuts her eyes)
 Oh God...

STEVE

Well, at least it's not burnt like the last time. You think you'll ever get around to feedin' my friends a decent meal?

CUT TO:

EXT. JACK IN THE BOX - NIGHT

SHIRLEY

...and four, no, no better make it six large fries.

It's pouring. Shirley is leaning out the window of her '74 Impala shouting into the order box. A pair of foam dice dangle from her rearview mirror.

SPEAKER

(garbled)

I can't hear ya!

SHIRLEY

That's four Kingburgers, two --

SPEAKER

What!?

Shirley punches open her car door, climbs out, cups her hands around the speaker.

SHIRLEY

Look, I want four Kingburgers, two --

SPEAKER

Jack In The Box, your order please.

And we

CUT TO:

EXT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. Rex, Judy, Steve and Shirley are standing outside, they've finally had dinner. Everyone is saying goodnight.

REX

Thanks for everything.

SHIRLEY

Oh hey, Rex, I'm really sorry --

JUDY

It's just as well. No damn dishes.

Everyone laughs.

QUICK CUT TO:

INSIDE STEVE'S PICKUP

An icy SILENCE. The truck needs new springs. Shirley has to clasp the door handle to avoid hitting her head on the roof. Steve turns on the radio -- it's TALKNET a call-in radio show.

SHIRLEY
(meaning the station)
This is good.

Steve punches another button to a Country & Western station -- "Let The Good Times Roll." He lights a joint, offers it to Shirley. She shakes her head. No. He turns the music up.

SHIRLEY
Steve, I'm sorry, it just wasn't
a great day for me.

STEVE
(making peace)
Forget about it, Shirley, it's over.

SHIRLEY
No, it's not just dinner...exactly.
(then)
I had a little trouble at work.

STEVE
What kinda trouble?

And we quickly

CUT TO:

THE PICKUP TRUCK as it careens around a corner and speeds toward us.

INSIDE THE TRUCK as Steve tears down the street, Shirley's now holding on with both hands.

SHIRLEY
But I was doing great!

STEVE
This time they fired you for being
great!

SHIRLEY
He said I was a great dancer, an
"angel," that's what he said, then...
he fired me.

JACK

Aw, Jesus.

SHIRLEY

I don't see what the big deal is,
we're takin' off soon anyway.

STEVE

No we're not.

SHIRLEY

Oh no...come on honey, don't do
this to me again.

STEVE

I already phoned Bill and told him
to forget the job. I got friends
here. I got a good place to live.
I don't want to go to Chicago.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT STEPS OF THE HOUSE

AS Shirley backpedals up the steps. It's pouring again.

SHIRLEY

What about us getting out of
this town?

Shirley is now blocking the front door.

STEVE

Shirley, you think there's some big
wonderful world out there and you're
missing it all...That's a bunch of
crap...Move out of the way, wouldya.

SHIRLEY

(doesn't budge)

Aren't you ever gonna go out and
honk your own horn, Steve? You're
never gonna leave here are ya?

STEVE

Hey, I ain't your husband. You
wanna go so bad. Go! Now move
out of the way, Shirley!

SHIRLEY

(doesn't budge)

But what about us, what about
gettin' married?

Steve grabs her by the waist, lifts her up and sets her down
behind him.

CUT TO:

STEVE
Ain't you been married enough?

Steve opens the door, slams it behind him.

SHIRLEY
(yanks the door open)
I didn't hear that.

INSIDE THE LIVING ROOM

Shirley is trailing right behind Steve as he heads for the stairs.

STEVE
...You got the Midas touch in reverse, you know that? You can't hold onto a guy; you can't cook; you can't even shuffle some horny old guys around a dance floor.
(he stops abruptly, turns around; she smacks into him)
Every God damn thing you do gets screwed up, Shirley!!

He starts up the stairs.

SHIRLEY
Hey, hey, Steve, you wait a minute. Steve!!

SOUND of the bedroom door slamming. Hold then

CUT TO:

THE BEDROOM - LATER

Steve is sleeping. Shirley is on her back, wide awake. She's been crying. Finally:

SHIRLEY
Hey, Steve...

Nothing. She shakes his shoulder.

STEVE
(crogg)
What...what time is it?

SHIRLEY
You're wrong about me.

Shirley wants to say more but doesn't have the courage.

STEVE
What's that?

She throws back the covers, goes to the bureau and yanks out a drawer.

SHIRLEY
I'm taking your bowling bag.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Shirley in her baseball jacket with "ROY'S GOOD TIME GRILL" in birthday script on the back; her untucked A.M. blouse hangs down to the middle of her skirt; her bathrobe is over one shoulder.

She's holding Steve's bowling bag with Larson's Tool & Die embossed on the side. She quickly opens the refrigerator door, grabs a six pack of beer then heads for the door. Stops. Dashes back, scoops up her crock-pot and scrambles for the front door.

CUT TO:

THE IMPALA

The crock-pot, bowling bag and beer on the front seat beside her. A pair of foam dice dangle from the rearview mirror. Shirley glances at the bedroom window for a beat, hoping the light will suddenly go on and Steve will come running after her. But he doesn't. She starts the car and we

CUT TO:

MAIN STREET

As Shirley's Impala tears down the street past the flickering Arthur Murray sign and swerves around the corner.

CUT TO:

A GAS STATION - DOWN THE ROAD - NIGHT

The ATTENDANT has just put the pump in Shirley's gas tank. He starts to wipe her windshield.

SHIRLEY
Say, you got any maps?
(pause)

ATTENDANT
You got anything in mind? Or should
I bring 'em out one state at a time?

SHIRLEY
Chicago... I want to go to Chicago.

ATTENDANT

You get on the highway two miles down.
Then it's south 94 all the way through
Minneapolis... But I got a tri-state inside.

He heads toward the station to get the map.

SHIRLEY

(calls out)

You sure that's the way?

The Attendant nods. Shirley starts her car and puts her
foot on the gas pedal forgetting...

ATTENDANT

Lady!

...that the hose is still in the tank. The Attendant
races after her but it's too late: the hose flies out
spraying gas in all directions... Shirley's taillights
disappear down the road.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN TO:

SHIRLEY'S SILVER HIGH HEELS, as they cross the Michigan
Avenue Bridge. We're in CHICAGO. Dawn. The Impala can
be seen parked half up on the curb in the b.g.

Shirley, dead tired, leans against the railing to watch
the sunrise over the lake. She's in her baseball jacket,
scarf, her hair tucked under a green cap with a JOHN
DEERE patch in the middle.

She turns back to see a cop car pulled up alongside her
car.

AT SHIRLEY'S CAR

as a cop writes a ticket.

SHIRLEY

But I was just on the bridge for
a second.

COP

It will cost you thirty bucks later
or...twenty now.

SHIRLEY

Twenty now?

The cop nods. Welcome to Chicago.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY -- paying off the cop.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELM STREET - APARTMENT HOTEL

on the north side. "Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates."

CUT TO:

INSIDE ELM STREET APARTMENT HOTEL

As Shirley counts out her week in advance payment to the supercilious DESK CLERK. The kind that thinks he's clerking at the Ritz.

SHIRLEY

...Hundred ten, hundred twenty.
That doesn't leave me much for
breakfast, does it?

CLERK

(coldly)
I wouldn't know.

More big city hospitality. Shirley grabs her crock-pot, bowling bag and six-pack from the desk and heads for the elevator under the Clerk's surly gaze. She gets into the elevator. The doors slam shut on the crock-pot cord... Doors open, Shirley yanks it in. Her eyes meet the condescending glare of the Clerk's. The doors slam shut.

CUT TO:

THE CORNER OF ELM & RUSH STREET - LATER

It's 7:30 a.m. and the city is coming alive. Shirley is struggling with the newsrack that has swallowed her quarter. She's furiously jiggling the lid to no avail. This quarter means a lot to her now.

MAN (O.S.)

I think you have to use a different
technique on this one.

Shirley turns to see JACK RYDER peering over her shoulder. Lanky, late twenties, Jack's in a brown parka, black jeans and badly scuffed tan boots. He's holding a beat up briefcase in one hand.

He hunches over, eyeballs the rack, then: he butts the right side with his elbow, taps the top with his fist, jerks his knee up from underneath -- the lid pops open. He pulls out two Sun-Times, hands one to Shirley along with her quarter.

JACK

It's almost worth it at this price.

Jack lifts up his sunglasses, peers down at Shirley's glittering heels. Shirley self-consciously crosses her feet at her ankles. Jack drops his sunglasses down.

SHIRLEY

Well thanks... I'm uh mostly interested in the want ads anyway.

JACK

One of the better reasons for buying it.

(Shirley eyes him skeptically)
No kidding. Some of the best writing in the paper goes into those little rectangles.

(sticks out his hand)
Jack Ryder.

Shirley hesitates, cautiously takes his hand, but she's not sure she wants to give him her name.

SHIRLEY

Hello, Jack Ryder.

(pause)

Hello.

JACK

Hello, hello. Now it's confirmed. I'm Jack and you're...

SHIRLEY

In a hurry.

Jack laughs, he set himself up for it. Checks his watch.

JACK

Yeah, me too.

(taps her paper)

Well look, good luck with this.

(gives her a brisk handshake)
Maybe another time.

He grabs his briefcase and takes off.

JACK

(without looking back)

I like those heels!

He disappears around the corner like a phantom. Shirley, dumbfounded, stands watching the empty street corner. Hold, then:

CUT TO:

THE BUILDING ENTRANCE

As Jack hurries inside, his head buried in the paper.
TILT UP to the bronze letters above the entrance: CHICAGO
SUN TIMES.

CUT TO:

CUMMINGS' OFFICE - SUN TIMES

A half dozen reporters are listening to DONALD CUMMINGS,
an ambitious associate editor in his mid thirties, as he
concludes the meeting.

CUMMINGS

...and I want everyone's summaries
in by four thirty for early copy.

Jack opens the door, walks in and slips into an empty chair.

CUMMINGS

Nice of you to show up, Jack. Next
time I'll give you a wake up call.

Jack checks his watch -- he's late? But Cummings is on to
his act. Turns back to the rest of the group:

CUMMINGS

Okay that's it, ladies. Gentlemen.

Everyone gets up, files out. ALEX walks past Jack and makes
a cutting gesture across his throat. Another reporter, SARAH
FINCH -- twenties, very straight and eager -- accidentally
catches Jack's eye.

JACK

How's it going, Finch?

She gives him a contemptuous look before disappearing out
the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CUMMINGS' OFFICE - LATER

JACK

...Your're not running it? Donald I
spent ten days with those cops. It's
a powerful piece. They come alive!

Jack's sitting on the couch leg. Cummings moves behind his
desk to pick up his pack of Kents.

CUMMINGS

This isn't the 'Voice , Jack, it's not even Rolling Stone.

(lights his cigarette)

Anyway, it's not what I asked for...
I reassigned it to Finch.

Jack springs to his feet, exasperated.

JACK

Finch?... With those guys? They'll shut her out. Why don't you just call AP?

CUMMINGS

Hey, you know you're hanging on by your fingernails here. If our managing editor didn't think you were such a "swell" writer, you'd be gone by now, understand?

(reluctantly Jack nods)

Good. Because I have another one you'll enjoy. The Louisiana bayous for three weeks. Cajun country. Conklin wants another one of his vanishing culture features. I told him you'd be great for it.

(hands Jack a summary sheet)

Willis has the details...And you better not screw it up this time.

JACK

(glances down at the sheet)

Louisiana bayous. That's just great...

(obviously pained)

Really. Sounds like fun...

CUT TO:

THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK CHICAGO - DAY

Shirley is sitting on a couch on the main floor, the newspaper in her lap, anxiously waiting to see if she is picked for the job. WIDEN to REVEAL thirty more men and women waiting for the same job.

A WOMAN emerges from an office door. Everyone sits up, drops their magazines and papers.

The Woman points at...Shirley. She can't believe it, springs to her feet...only to discover that it's the girl BEHIND her who has been called for the job.

CUT TO:

INT ADELHI'S - DAY

Three MEN sitting at a table having drinks.

Shirley in her Arthur Murray outfit is dancing to Hard Rock music on the small dais. She's great.

The music stops. Perspiring, she steps down from the stage.

MAN

You sure can move, honey.

SHIRLEY

You name it, I can do it.

MAN #1

I bet you can.

MAN#2

Let me see your tits, sunshine.

Pause. Then

CUT TO:

THE PAGE OF WANT ADS as the ad for "Well's Street Club Need Dancer" is being X-ed out with nail polish. All the ads above it have similarly been X-ed out. There's one left: A radio station receptionist.

SHIRLEY sitting beneath the WLOS call letters. She caps her nail polish, drops it in her bag.

RUTH HOPKINS, 30's, in charge of hiring for the station steps in to the reception area.

HOPKINS

(reading from her
clipboard)

Shirley Kenton.

SHIRLEY

(bit too strong)

Right here!

It's this job or nothing.

CUT TO:

HOPKINS' OFFICE

HOPKINS

...We need someone right away.

Hopkins is behind her desk. Shirley is sitting attentively in front of her.

HOPKINS

Someone with a pleasant disposition...

(Hopkins fingers a photograph
on the edge of her desk)

Things can get hectic around here.

(she glances up, Shirley's giving
her her best and biggest smile;

looks down, picks up her application)

What do we have here. Waitress, waitress,
cocktail waitress, bartender...

SHIRLEY

I was just working my way up.

HOPKINS

...Waitress

(pause)

Manicurist, chef.

SHIRLEY

That's Denny's -- the big chain.

HOPKINS

(ignoring her)

...dance instructor.

(beat)

No reception work?

SHIRLEY

No, not exactly. But I've answered
phones... Of course...yeah...

She's in trouble.

SHIRLEY

Look, maybe I'm not quite what
you're hunting for but I just got
into the city, and maybe if we
could talk a little...(sees the name plate on
the desk)

...Ruth.

Shirley slides her chair closer to the desk. She notices
the photo Hopkins has been toying with throughout the
interview.

SHIRLEY

Great looking family. That's
your husband there, right?

HOPKINS

My ex-husband, now.

SHIRLEY

That's a shame...

(slides her chair
even closer)

...Boy, do I know what that's like.

We don't hear Hopkins' response. We don't have to: these two will be commiserating for quite a while.

CUT TO:

HALLWAY - WLOS

ALAN

...Okay, all right, so Dr. Stanford wasn't God's gift to talk radio.

ALAN RIEGERT, the station's program director, tall and dapper, early thirties, is walking beside his boss GENE PERLMAN, the station's general manager.

PERLMAN

I'd say she was death, Alan.

NANCY

And we dropped to a nine share.

Alan glances at NANCY as if to say "thanks for nothing." Nancy is a producer. She's ten years older than Alan and resents the younger man's naked ambition.

At the far end of the hall we should GLIMPSE Shirley stepping out of an office with Hopkins. Shirley is talking, Hopkins nodding in agreement. They disappear around the far corner.

PERLMAN

So where are we now?

They all walk into...

PERLMAN'S OFFICE

ALAN

(reading from his pad)
Doctor...Doctor Kendell. I tested her myself Gene. She's terrific. She had a very popular show in Des Moines... This one's going to work out.

Perlman glances up at Nancy.

NANCY

I was on vacation. I haven't met her yet.

ALAN
(checks his watch)
Listen, I have to run to my
accountant, but I'll be back
in plenty of time for the show.
(then)
Would you two take it easy, it's
going to be okay.

CUT TO:

THE RECEPTION AREA WLOS

An oval desk, the WLOS logo overhead. Shirley has her
headset on and she's being given the rundown by JANICE.

JANICE
...You can ignore this row here,
they go straight through to the
Dr. Stanford show.

SHIRLEY
Dr. Stanford?

JANICE
The call-in shrink. There's a new
one coming in today. Dr. Kendell
or somethin'.
(takes out a pass)
Here's a pass...
(she pins the visitor
pass on Shirley's blouse)
So you don't have any trouble getting
past the guards until they know you.

SHIRLEY
Thanks.

JANICE
You had lunch yet?
(Shirley shakes her head)
I'll pick you up something on the
way back.

SHIRLEY
(light flashes)
WLOS radio, hello? Hello, this
is Shirley.

Nothing.

JANICE
You put her on hold.

SHIRLEY
Right, right I know.
(hits another button)

JANICE
You just cut her off.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE BROADCASTING STUDIO - LATER

An impatiently waiting Nancy is sipping coffee from the vending machine. A SECRETARY hurries up to her.

SECRETARY
I tried Dr. Kendell everywhere,
home, office. Nothing. Mr.
Perlman's left for the day.

NANCY
(glances at the clock,
taps out cigarette)
She should've been here half an
hour ago.
(then)
You try Alan?

SECRETARY
The accountant said he left a few
minutes ago.

NANCY
Terrific.
(lights cigarette)
Now we're going to get one that
doesn't show up at all.

CUT TO:

A LINE OF BLINKING LIGHTS, at the reception desk. An INDEX FINGER dotted with mustard reaches INTO THE FRAME and hits a button.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Sorry, sorry, sorry. I'll shoot
you through now.

On Shirley, as she polishes off her hot dog. She wipes her fingers with her napkin. Notices several dots of mustard on the buttons and tries to dab them clean with her napkin -- accidentally cutting off a half dozen callers.

SHIRLEY
(sotto)
Oh shit...
(MORE)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 (another call)
 Hi, Shirley, WLOS. Doctor who?...
 Dr. Kendell...

Suddenly, all the callers she inadvertently just cut off, call back at once. Every light flashes.

SHIRLEY
 (hits one)
 Shirley. Hold.
 (back to Dr. Kendell)
 Yes, Doctor... You can't...
 He's sick? What's a matter with
 him? Sorry, hold.
 (quickly hits three buttons)
 Shirley. Hold. Hold. Hold.
 Dr. Kendell, I'm sorry, I'll have
 to get back to you.
 (cuts her off, picks
 up another call)
 I know you've been holding. I've
 been holding you.

CUT TO:

THE RECEPTION DESK. Later. Janice has returned to relieve Shirley. Shirley's about to take off on her break. She's unplugged her headset but she still has it on.

SHIRLEY
 ...Then a left, and I'm in the
 coffee room. Got it. Thanks.

Shirley starts off.

JANICE
 Hey, Shirley --

Janice points at her head.

SHIRLEY
 Oh sure, sure, I know. Thanks.

She takes it off and hands it to Janice. Janice looks at this girl in disbelief. Shirley's still in her Murray outfit, the only clothes she took besides jeans. Shirley takes off, her heels reverberating loudly down the hallway.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE BROADCASTING BOOTH

Nancy and the engineer GORDON, thirties, chinos, baggy sweater, are impatiently waiting for Dr. Kendell.

It's minutes from air time.

GORDON
...She's probably on her way up.

NANCY
With two minutes to go? She's
not showing... God dammit.

Gordon smiles, he's spotted someone through the window
coming down the hall.

GORDON
That must be our girl.

Nancy turns to see: Shirley, obviously lost, trying to find
the coffee room. Her visitor pass is pinned to her chest.
It has her last name in magic marker beneath the call letters:
KENTON.

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY

Nancy hurries up to her.

NANCY
Jesus, Kendell, we don't have much
time...

SHIRLEY
She told me right, then the first
left --

NANCY
I'm Nancy Sloan...

Nancy whisks her into...

THE ENGINEERING BOOTH

And leads her by the arm toward the studio.

NANCY
...This is Gordon Sussmen, our
engineer.

GORDON
(preoccupied cueing up a tape)
How's it going, Kendell.

SHIRLEY
(back over her shoulder)
Kenton.

NANCY
I thought it was Kendell?

SHIRLEY

I should know my own name.

NANCY

Yeah, sure sure.

Nancy shoves open the studio door and hustles Shirley inside.

BROADCASTING STUDIO

Gordon can be seen through the glass at the board. Nancy will be screening Shirley's calls in another booth to Shirley's left. Nancy's giving Shirley some last minute instructions on the console.

NANCY

...your hold button is right here,
this is the kill button...

SHIRLEY

Kill button?

NANCY

The rest you should be familiar with.

SHIRLEY

I should?

Gordon comes over the speaker: "10 seconds."

Shirley glances up at the ceiling to see where this voice is coming from.

NANCY

Better put your phones on.

Shirley hesitates. Nancy hands her the headphones.

SHIRLEY

You want me to go on the radio?

NANCY

That's very funny. Good luck.

SHIRLEY

Wait a minute, Miss Hopkins didn't
tell me--

But Nancy's out the studio door. Gordon hits the pre-recorded tape button:

BRASSY THEME MUSIC then: "W L O S Chicago, talk raaydeeo..."
(theme music continues under) "You're invited to participate
in a program designed to help you find a richer, more pro-
ductive life. Talk radio is sharing your concerns and
problems, helping to find answers and solutions." MUSIC UP.

Shirley, lost, glances at Gordon as he cues Nancy.

NANCY
(music continues under)
And now WLOS' Dr. Shirley Kendell.

SHIRLEY
(mouths)
Kenton.

Gordon cues Shirley. Shirley imitates him, cues him right back. A red light goes on at the base of her microphone. The ON AIR sign illuminates. She's on.

CALLER
Hello?...Hello, Dr. Kendell...

SHIRLEY
(leaning awkwardly
into the mike)
WLOS Radio...
(hesitantly)
This is Shirley...

Nothing. Gordon rolls his hands over one another meaning "keep going." Shirley spots him, rolls her hands, imitating him again. Gordon glances over at Nancy but she's too busy screening the next call to notice. Shirley leans into the mike again.

SHIRLEY
Um, it's me, Shirley. What's doin'?

She glances up at Gordon -- "How was that?"

CALLER
Not so well. It's my husband again.

SHIRLEY
Who is this?

CALLER
I'm Gladys, Gladys from Northbrook.
I'm thirty-five and --

SHIRLEY
Do I know you?

On Gordon who doesn't understand what's going on.

CALLER
I tried calling before.

Shirley SNAPS her fingers in front of the mike. Gordon lifts his headphone pads from his ears.

SHIRLEY

(thinking she's figured
it out)Around lunch time, when I was up
front, right? I must've cut you off.

(before caller can respond)

Jesus, I'm really sorry, it was crazy
around here, Gladys...

(pause)

...from Northbrook.

Gordon glances up at her again.

CALLER

It's my husband Phil -- he's thirty-
eight. Well, we've started having...
problems again.

SHIRLEY

(genuinely, forgetting
she's on the radio)

That's a shame. What's going on?

CUT TO:

A RED PEUGOT

crawling down Lake Shore Drive caught in bumper to bumper
traffic. Alan is at the wheel listening to his new girl
with a sinking heart.

SHIRLEY/RADIO

That's...that's terrible... I don't
know what to say, Gladys. I -- God --
I don't know what to say.

ALAN

Say something.

SHIRLEY/RADIO

Jeez, I just don't know what to say.
That's one of the worst things I've
ever heard.

ALAN

(sotto)

Jesus.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

A puzzled Shirley at the mike. Gordon is mouthing "referral."
Shirley doesn't get it.

SHIRLEY
 (on air)
 Hold on a sec, Gladys.
 (to Gordon)
 What?

GORDON
 (through headphones)
 Give her a referral number!

SHIRLEY
 (on air)
 Referral for what?

GORDON
 (sotto)
 Christ...

CUT TO:

LAKE SHORE DRIVE

Alan, furious, is tearing down the emergency lane, heading for the nearest exit.

SHIRLEY
 (new caller)
 ...So you've stopped sleeping with
 your wife, isn't that what you're
 trying to say, David?

CALLER
 I guess it is...yes...

SHIRLEY
 So, who are you foolin' around with?

CALLER
 It's not that, it's not that at all.
 I've just...lost interest in her.

SHIRLEY
 Yeah, and who you foolin' around with?

CALLER
 (reluctantly)
 A girl in my office.

SHIRLEY
 Well, surprise, surprise...

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

As Shirley, headphone cord twisted around her fingers, is still on with her last caller.

CALLER

(distraught)

...But I'm not like this. I've had a great marriage for nineteen years. I have three wonderful kids...

SHIRLEY

You're fifty-seven, right? What's the scoop on the girl?

CALLER

(pause)

She's...twenty -- very attractive, sweet girl... I think I'm in love with her.

SHIRLEY

Well say, David, if you're in love with her, why not leave your wife?

CALLER

No! No! I would never do that.

SHIRLEY

But you just said you've lost interest in your wife and you love this girl?

(long pause, nothing from

David, she's made her point)

She's great in the sack, isn't she, David?

CALLER

(reluctantly)

Yeah...

SHIRLEY

Maybe she makes you feel young again?

CALLER

That's... probably true, too.

SHIRLEY

Not love is it?

CALLER

(reluctantly)

No, no I guess it's not, Shirley.

Shirley nods in agreement as we

CUT TO:

A LIQUOR STORE

Alan's in a phone booth. Lake Shore Drive in the b.g.

ALAN

She's who?

CUT TO:

THE RECEPTION DESK - WLOS

Janice is speaking to Alan.

JANICE

...That's right, Mr. Riegert.
I just looked myself. It's
that new girl who went to get
coffee... I don't know -- yes,
yes I'll get her right away.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY IN THE BOOTH

CALLER

Hi, this is Joan from Moline.

SHIRLEY

Joan -- Shirley, what's cookin'?

CUT TO:

NANCY'S BOOTH

She's on the phone with Alan.

NANCY

Jesus, you've got to be kidding...

Nancy glances up at Shirley working another call.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY ON THE AIR

Listening attentively to the new caller, who is clearly
upset.

SHIRLEY

...Uh huh and then what?

CALLER

My boss gave me notice. I was
the best tipped girl in the
place, Shirley, but he said I
was messin' up too many orders.
And when I came home and told
my husband, Ken...

(now on the verge
of tears)

...He uh, just looked at me like
I was something horrible...and he
said... I don't think I can handle
this on the radio...

SHIRLEY

Take your time, Joan, I got no
place to go.

ON NANCY, livid, standing outside the booth waiting for
Shirley to finish the call so she can pull her off the
air.

CALLER

...He said I was a loser...that
I couldn't hold a job; that the
house was always a mess. That if
it weren't for him --

The caller starts to choke on her words. She can't continue.
Shirley swells with anger: this is similar to what Steve
did to her.

SHIRLEY

(heatedly)

He said all that to you!

CALLER

(hard for her)

Yes...yes he did.

SHIRLEY

You have kids, Joan?

CALLER

No.

SHIRLEY

You sure? -- Sure, you're sure.
Joan, listen...

(NOTE: This is not what Shirley said to Steve, but what
she wishes she had had the courage to say.)

SHIRLEY

I want you to march up to this
guy, and I want you to tell him...

(surprised at what's coming
from her mouth)

...tell him that you're not gonna
take this crap any longer. That
you can do fine on your own --
'thank you very much' -- and that
he's gonna be damn sorry. Then grab
your bowling bag -- your stuff and
get the hell out of there.

Shirley backs off from the mike like a wound up pop singer
catching her breath between the lines.

CALLER

Do you really think I should?

SHIRLEY

Look, Joan, sometimes you just got
to go out an' honk your own horn,
because no one else is gonna do it
for you. Know what I mean?

Gordon glances up at Nancy, "Honk your own horn?"

CALLER

...Okay, okay I'll try it.

SHIRLEY

Try it?

CALLER

Okay, I'm going to do it. I'm
going to honk it!

(then)

Thanks, Dr. Shirley.

The line goes dead.

SHIRLEY

Shirley.

Nancy bursts in . And we quickly

CUT TO:

THE ELEVATORS WLOS

As Nancy hustles Shirley into the elevator. Hits
the down button.

SHIRLEY
 (holding up her arms)
 ...Okay, all right, maybe I wasn't
 so hot on the radio, but you're the
 one who shoved me in there.

Nancy lifts the visitor pin from Shirley's blouse, causing
 a small tear. Steps out of the elevator.

SHIRLEY
 Say, wait a minute, you owe me for --
 The elevator doors slam shut in her face.

CUT TO:

WRIGLEY BUILDING REVOLVING DOOR

A dejected Shirley is straight arming the door around.
 Suddenly she decides she's going back! But instead of
 continuing around she does an about face and tries to go
 back in the WRONG DIRECTION. She is abruptly flung out...

OUTSIDE THE WRIGLEY BUILDING - NIGHT

...onto the sidewalk. She looks up at the top of the build-
 ing. Wants to go back, but suddenly all the fight drains
 out of her... She slowly starts off down the street.

CUT TO:

THE SUN TIMES BUILDING - NIGHT

As Jack and Alex come out of the revolving doors.

JACK
 ...Maybe I'll get a tan. You can
 get a tan in Louisiana, can't you?

ALEX
 He really nailed you, Jack.
 (laughs)
 Hey, why don't you get Finch to
 cover it.

Jack glances at Alex as if to say "very funny."

ALEX
 You know you're just begging for a
 pink slip. Why don't you just quit
 already so you can go finish your
 novel.

JACK
I don't have enough saved yet...
Another five, six months.

ALEX
Who're you kidding, Jack? You've
been saying that for the last year
and a half. You're never going to
do it, man.

JACK
(spots someone on the
other side of the street)
Hey!

It's a very depressed Shirley, her John Deere cap pulled
low over her forehead, hands tucked in her coat pockets.

JACK
How'd it go?

Shirley glances over at him, says nothing, continues on
disappearing into the crowd.

ALEX
Who's that?...

JACK
(watching her)
I don't know, wouldn't give me
her name.
(turns back to him)
Alex, where the hell do I buy a
pair of wading boots?

CUT TO:

INSIDE HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Shirley's trying to get her money back from the surly
Desk Clerk.

SHIRLEY
...You mean I can't get any of my
advance back if I leave tomorrow?
(Desk Clerk nods)
But that isn't fair!

DESK CLERK
In your opinion.

Shirley slams the palm of her hand down on the desk. She
looks like she's going to explode. But...

SHIRLEY
(resigned)
I should've never come...

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT

The street lights bleed through the thin curtains.
Shirley's sitting on the floor on the phone.

STEVE (V.O.)
Hey, who is this? Hello?

Shirley is holding her hand over the mouthpiece, trying
to muster her courage to say something.

SHIRLEY
(softly)
It's me...

STEVE (V.O.)
Shirley, where the hell are you?
Are you at Lilly's again.

SHIRLEY
(weakening)
I'm in my room.
(trying to hold
it together)
I...I just wanted you to know
that I...accidentally took your
bowling shoes...

STEVE (V.O.)
Shirley. Cut this shit out and
tell me where you are.

Not what she wanted to hear. Nothing has changed.

SHIRLEY
I've got to go now...

STEVE (V.O.)
Shirley, would you cut it out
and get back here already?
Shirley?

She starts to hang up, then pulls the receiver back to
her ear.

SHIRLEY
Bye.
(pause)
Steve...bye.

She slowly hangs up. She remains sitting on the floor.
The HISS and PING of the radiator. Hold, then:

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

TO SHIRLEY, stepping out of the elevator the following morning. Her bowling bag in one hand, her crock-pot in the other. The cord trails along beside her on the floor. Her John Deere cap is tipped forward on her head.

DESK CLERK
(spots her)
Miss Kenton --

SHIRLEY
(waves him off, continues
walking toward the door)
Keep the money.

DESK CLERK
A Mr. Perlman has called you a
half dozen times, your phone was
off the hook.

SHIRLEY
(still walking;
not looking back)
I don't know any Perlman...

DESK CLERK
But there's a car waiting for you.

Shirley stops, glances back at the Clerk. He points out the door. A limousine is parked in front of the building.

A DRIVER in a cap and dark suit who has been waiting in the lobby comes up to her.

DRIVER
Miss Kenton?

She looks down to where her name tag was the day before. How does this guy know her name, too?

SHIRLEY
(cautiously)
Yeah...

A small motley CROWD has now gathered to see what this is all about.

DRIVER
Mr. Perlman at WLOS sent me to
bring you down to the station.

Shirley points out the door at the limousine, then at her chest.

SHIRLEY

Shirley...Ken-ton?

(the driver nods)

Oh shit... Hey look, I didn't
want to go on the radio. It was
a mistake.

DRIVER

Please Ms. Kenton, I was told to
bring you in.

Shirley acquiesces. Realizing the desk clerk is now watching,
she tries to be nonchalant. She returns to the desk and
sets down her bowling bag and crock-pot.

SHIRLEY

Perlman sent a limousine down for
me. Hold this stuff, would you?

CLERK

(unfazed)

Yes, Miss Kenton.

She backs away, keeping her eye on him, till she gets to
the door. Then spins around and hurries out.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT OF THE HOTEL, a few of the guests from inside have
stepped out to watch. The limousine pulls away...the window
goes down.

SHIRLEY

(pokes her head out)

I think it's got a TV!

And the limousine disappears around the corner.

CUT TO:

RECEPTION AREA WLOS

Shirley steps out of the elevator to see a new WOMAN at
the reception desk.

SHIRLEY

That was fast.

PERLMAN'S OFFICE

Alan, Perlman, Nancy, anxiously waiting for Shirley's
arrival.

NANCY

...I still think it's a mistake,
the woman has no broadcast
experience -- she's a god damn
dancer --

The door opens. Shirley pokes her head in. Stops dead
when she spots Nancy on the couch. Nancy swallows her words.

PERLMAN

Miss Kenton?

(Shirley nods)

Come in, come in, please.

Shirley does but keeps a wary eye on Nancy. Sticks close
to the door.

PERLMAN

Do you know what's been happening
since you left here yesterday?

SHIRLEY

Sure, you hired someone else to
answer the phone.

PERLMAN

We've had over five thousand calls.

SHIRLEY

Hey look...

(takes a step back)

...that's not my fault too.

Perlman steps toward her, Shirley takes another step back
and bumps up against the door. Nancy taps out another
cigarette. Can't believe this girl.

PERLMAN

No, you were a hit. We've never
had anything like it.

(begins to pump her hand)

They love you.

Shirley is baffled. Alan gets up, grabs a handful of tele-
grams from the desk.

ALAN

Take a look at these.

(hands her the telegrams;
shakes her free hand)

Alan Riegert, program director.
You were terrific yesterday.

Shirley begins to read one of the telegrams; a smile sweeps
across her face. She glances up, points at her chest with
her index finger.

ALAN
That's right.

SHIRLEY
Are there any more?

PERLMAN
Yes, yes hundreds.

She charges past them to the desk and picks up a handful of telegrams.

SHIRLEY
(sotto)
Jesus...

PERLMAN
(holds up a contract)
We'd like to give you your own program. Three hours a day, five days a week.

Shirley's too busy reading the telegrams to hear him.

INSERT TELEGRAM

DEAR DR. KENTON - THANKS FOR THE
STRAIGHT DOPE. YOU'RE THE GREATEST
EXCLAMATION POINT SUE METZGER, WAUKEGAN

Perlman hands her the contract along with a pen. Shirley takes it.

SHIRLEY
(a lot of money for her)
...Four hundred dollars a week --
no reception work?

Perlman nods. Nancy and Alan exchange looks -- can't believe what Perlman's getting her for.

Shirley looks like she's going to sign, but suddenly she stops.

SHIRLEY
It says ... 'Doctor Shirley' here.

CUT TO:

PERLMAN'S OFFICE - MUCH LATER

Shirley's worn them out. Perlman is pouring himself a scotch. Alan is slumped down in a chair. Nancy reaches for her cigarettes -- none left.

Shirley is sitting in Perlman's chair, his gold pen perched between her fingers, studying the revised contract.

PERLMAN

...Eight hundred a week, that's
our final offer.

Shirley leans forward as if she were going to sign. Alan,
Perlman and Nancy all lean slightly forward in anticipation.

SHIRLEY

(reading)

But it still says 'Doctor Shirley'
here.

They all lean back.

PERLMAN

Look, let me try it again. You're
a doctor of the heart, you don't
need to be an actual doctor.
Yesterday you were on the air as
Dr. Shirley. If you go on tomorrow
and you're not a doctor, what will
your listeners think?

SHIRLEY

(deadpan)

That I'm not a doctor.

Perlman's exasperated.

ALAN

But you'd lose your credibility.
They'll think you lied to them.
They won't trust you anymore.
Besides, no one will know the
difference. We'll hire a first
rate PR firm to make a sure proof
biography for you.

PERLMAN

Miss Kenton, if we thought we were
doing a disservice to our listeners,
we'd be the first to say so.

Shirley still hesitates.

PERLMAN

One thousand a week, that's absolutely
our final offer. Take it or leave it,
Miss Kenton.

Alan, Nancy and Perlman all lean slightly forward again in
anticipation. Shirley is just about to sign when she glances
up to see them all leaning forward. Smiles.

SHIRLEY

Call me, Shirley.

She begins to sign and we

CUT TO:

THE BACK OF A LIMOUSINE. Shirley is having champagne with Alan. Two demi-bottles of Chardon Rouge on the fold out bar.

SHIRLEY

(finishing her glass)

...If only Steve could see me now.

ALAN

That's your ex-husband?

SHIRLEY

No, no... Steve's the guy I just ran out on.

Alan picks up the champagne. Empty. He begins to open the second bottle.

SHIRLEY

No, no let me...

(takes it)

There's a way you hold it so the cork won't fly off.

The cork pops off and bounces off the glass behind the driver and all three windows before it lands on the floor.

SHIRLEY

It doesn't work all the time.

She fills both glasses.

ALAN

I thought you said you were divorced?

Shirley, sipping her champagne holds up three fingers.

ALAN

Three times?

SHIRLEY

More?

(she pours him more)

But it was to the same guy...so it's not like really being married three times... He was in the service... He left, he came back, he left, he came back...

(waves her arm)

What a mess...forget it.

She sips more champagne. Alan takes a long drink.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT

As Alan is escorting her toward the door. She's a bit dizzy from the champagne. She's still holding one of the unopened demi-bottles. Crumpled telegrams are stuffed in her coat pockets and shoulder bag.

ALAN

...And Shirley, a lot of the things you told me, you have to be careful not to mention to anyone else. You're Dr. Shirley now, not some divorced...
(she holds up three fingers)
...dance teacher from Fergus Falls.
Okay?

Shirley nods. They both stop at the door.

ALAN

(looking her over)
We also have to get you some new clothes, fix your hair up a little for the publicity shots.

SHIRLEY

(drunken smile)
Okay...okay.

Alan kisses her on the cheek, then starts to slide around to her lips.

SHIRLEY

Okay...

Meaning stop. He does.

ALAN

Well, goodnight then.

Shirley smiles beatifically. Alan climbs into his Peugeot.

SHIRLEY

(calling after him)
Hey, I had a great...
(the Peugeot pulls away)
...time!

She grabs the door handle. A few telegrams spill out of her pocket. She picks them up, but more tumble out. She scoops them up...finally shoving open the door with her foot and slipping inside.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE LOBBY

As the Desk Clerk slides the bowling bag and the crock-pot across the front desk to Shirley.

SHIRLEY
(holding up a new key)
...This is the best and the biggest
room you got?

CLERK
That's correct.

SHIRLEY
(imitating his
clipped tone)
Thank you.

She heads for the elevator leaving a trail of telegrams in her wake.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT

She pulls open the bedroom drapes.

SHIRLEY'S POV -- of the apartment across the street and a floor down. It's the man who opened the newspaper rack for her the other day, working at his typewriter.

SHIRLEY
(shoving open her window)
Hey!

CUT TO:

JACK'S STUDIO

Paperbacks stacked everywhere. Miles Davis is on the stereo. A packed suitcase sits open on a card chair, a pair of wading boots on top. A thick manuscript sits on his desk. Jack's clearly not writing a piece for the paper -- he's working on his novel.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
(faintly)
Hello. Hey! I got lucky!

JACK'S POV of Shirley, silhouetted by a lamp, waving at him from her window across the street. Jack can't see her clearly, but whoever she is, she's drunk and he wants to continue working.

JACK
Great!
(resumes typing)

SHIRLEY
(holding up the bottle)
Don't you want some champagne!

Shirley pours him a glass of champagne, leans out the window. Of course, it would be impossible to hand it to him.

JACK
(reaches for his window shade)
No thanks!

Shirley leans further out the window. It's getting a little precarious.

JACK
Hey...
(waving her back)
...go back inside. You're going to fall!
(starts to pull down his shade)
I'll see you later.

The glass slips from Shirley's hand.

SHIRLEY
Oh...shit.

...and smashes against the roof of a passing taxi. Jack leans out the window as the taxi skids to a halt.

JACK
Nice shot.

He yanks the shade down for good.

SHIRLEY
Hey!

Shirley slides down onto her radiator, too drunk to care. After a few seconds she breaks into a broad grin, and as if realizing it for the first time:

SHIRLEY
Dr. Shirley...

CUT TO:

A WOMAN'S HAND - FOLLOWING DAY

as it tears off the band of a fresh pack of Kool Menthol cigarettes.

NANCY (O.S.)
 ...That's right, it's Dr. Shirley
 today... And what do you want to
 ask Dr. Shirley, Rita?

We're in Nancy's booth. She's screening calls. Glances
 up to see Shirley in her booth.

SHIRLEY'S STUDIO

as she reaches for the Anacin. Still hung over from the
 champagne. She's sitting in front of the mike. The
 studio is dark except for the small pool of light that
 surrounds her. She's wearing her sweatshirt and jeans.
 Unlike the previous time, she's had time to think about
 it all and is nervous.

GORDON
 ...Take a deep breath...relax...
 fifteen seconds...

SHIRLEY
 (panic)
 Fifteen seconds...

She reaches for a glass of water to wash down the aspirin,
 accidentally knocking over a jar of pencils with her elbow.
 They clatter to the floor.

SHIRLEY
 (sotto)
 Shit...

She disappears beneath the desk to pick them up at the
 precise moment the BRASSY INTRODUCTION MUSIC comes on
 the air. The music continues under:

WLOS CHICAGO, TALK RAAYDEEO... YOU'RE INVITED TO PARTICI-
 PATE IN A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO HELP YOU FIND A RICHER, MORE
 PRODUCTIVE LIFE. TALK RADIO IS SHARING YOUR CONCERNS AND
 PROBLEMS, HELPING TO FIND ANSWERS AND SOLUTIONS (music up)
 AND NOW WLOS' NEW HOST -- DR. SHIRLEY!

Alan slips into Nancy's booth to watch.

ALAN
 Where is she?

NANCY
 On the floor picking up her pencils.
 (Shirley reappears,
 pencils in hand)
 I don't know about this.

ALAN
 She's gonna be great, relax.

MUSIC FADES. ON AIR sign flashes. The red light at the base of Shirley's mike goes on. Gordon cues her.

SHIRLEY

Hi... This is me...me.

(quickly)

Dr. Shirley on the Dr. Shirley Show.

(pause)

I want to...uh, welcome, welcome --

Then it happens -- she FREEZES. Nothing. DEAD AIR.

NANCY

Jesus...

It seems to stretch for an eternity.

GORDON

(through Shirley's headphones)

The copy in front of you. Read from the copy.

(nothing)

Come on, honey, pick it up! Read it!

Still nothing. Alan raps on the glass. Shirley spots him. He holds up a sheet of paper. Mouths "Read it," points. She snaps out of it. Picks up the copy and begins to read.

SHIRLEY

(stiff)

...Welcome you to the program.

I'm very happy to be part of the WLOS family.

(pause)

Am I really on?

Nancy gives Alan an "I told you so" look and we quickly

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO - LATER - SHIRLEY

at the mike. A bit more relaxed but still stiff.

SHIRLEY

...and when was the last time you had sex with your husband?

CALLER

1978.

SHIRLEY

1978? Jesus, Susan...

CALLER

Sonia.

SHIRLEY

Sonia.

Nancy and Alan exchange looks again and we

DISSOLVE TO:

THE ON THE AIR SIGN

several days later.

CALLER

...it was the brake lining or something,
the car just never stopped. We were
married sixteen years.

DROP DOWN to Shirley in a new blouse and skirt. She's on
her feet moving back and forth in front of the mike, head-
phones on a long stretch cord clamped over her ears. Her
eyes are on the floor as she concentrates on the call.

SHIRLEY

How long ago was this?

CALLER

Over a year now.

SHIRLEY

(compassionate; self assured)
Listen Bob, I don't know about any
of this encounter stuff or the
psychoanalysis, but losing someone like
that... You can't ever replace them...
You shouldn't even try.

(then)

Sometimes it seems like the pain's gone,
but it's not. The hurt just gets a bit
smaller that's all...but maybe that's
good, maybe that's the way it should be...

CALLER

You know, Dr. Shirley, sometimes, when
I'm driving my car on the highway I
start to watch the edge of the road...
And I start to drive closer and closer
to the white line... Sometimes I just
feel...

(long pause)

SHIRLEY

(finally)

Feel like driving off it... don't you.

(nothing from Bob)

Don't you, Bob?

CALLER
(reluctantly; pause)
Yes...yes I do.

SHIRLEY
I know how you're feeling', believe
me.

And we DO BELIEVE her. Shirley doesn't empathize with the pain and frustration of her callers; she feels it as if it were her own. Every problem is her problem. This and her often inadvertent, skewed sense of humor is what is about to shoot her to the top of the ratings.

SHIRLEY
'Cause I...um felt the same way
when my younger sister died.

BOB
That you couldn't go on?

SHIRLEY
That there was no way I could go on.
(then)
Listen, Bob, nothing I can say is going
to make you feel better... And saying
I'm sorry, doesn't mean much, I know that...

BOB
Well... It feels good talking to you
about it, doctor... It's not so hard
with you.

SHIRLEY
Then let's talk some more. And Bob,
call me Shirley.

Alan glances at Nancy. This time it's Alan who's gloating.
Shirley's great!

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SCENES that take place over SEVERAL WEEKS.
Shirley's radio voice segues through the cuts.

1. A LONG LINE OF TELEPHONE OPERATORS -- ILLINOIS BELL

SHIRLEY/RADIO
(intense; new caller)
...You got to believe in yourself...

WE TRACK DOWN the line of operators. Only a handful of them are doing their job. The rest are listening to Shirley on their transistor radios and walkmans, ignoring the banks of blinking lights in front of them.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
 I mean, Jesus, Annie. I've been
 dumped on so hard I thought I
 was gonna die. God, we've all
 been dumped on, haven't we?

And ALL THE OPERATORS seem to nod their heads at the same
 time. And we

CUT TO:

2. A SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - GLENCOE

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
 (new caller)
 Just, umm how many times a night
 is that?

CALLER (V.O.)
 Five.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
 Five nights a week, five times a
 night?

THREE TEENAGE GIRLS are sitting in the front seat of a
 Buick. The car is filled with cigarette smoke. They're
 all smoking the same cigarettes -- Benson & Hedges Kings.
 They're hanging on to Shirley's every word.

CALLER (V.O.)
 That's right.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
 Jesus, Marge... you have this
 guy's number?
 (quickly)
 Just kidding...just kidding, Marge.

CUT BACK TO:

3. THE STUDIO - ANOTHER DAY

Shirley on her feet again. We can't hear what's being said
 but she's extremely animated -- furious. She pounds her
 fist on the desk.

ON GORDON
 lifting his headphone pads from his ears...

BACK TO SHIRLEY
 She slams her fist down again.

CUT TO:

4. WRIGLEY BUILDING LOBBY

As Shirley steps out of the elevator to see TWO DOZEN PEOPLE come charging toward her. They want her autograph... In a flash she is surrounded...disappears.

CUT TO:

5. THE STUDIO

Shirley, leaning into the mike.

SHIRLEY

...Julie, that's, that's one I really don't have the answer for. But we do have several good referrals for you. So hold on a sec.

Shirley smoothly cues the call to Nancy. Gordon glances up, gives her a thumbs up.

CUT TO:

6. REGINA'S SHOE STORE

Shirley is gazing upon rows and rows of expensive women's shoes. Lisa (the secretary) and Alan are beside her. The SALESGIRL holds up two pairs of Maud Frizon heels: "which does she want?" Shirley points to both. She Sales-girl nods, starts to take off but Shirley stops her. Shirley points to another pair...then quickly to another... In a matter of seconds she's pointed out two dozen pairs of shoes.

CUT TO:

7. A THREE WAY MIRROR - LORD & TAYLOR

Shirley in a stylish Stanley Blacker business suit over a blouse with a high ruffled collar. She's never worn anything like this and is uncomfortable. She shoves the collar down. The SALESWOMAN working on the hem stops, shoves it right back up. Shirley turns to Lisa and Alan on the couch. They both nod approvingly. She turns back to the mirror. Shoves the collar down again. The Saleswoman shoves it right back up.

A BRILLIANT FLASH of light.

CUT TO:

8. A PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO

Shirley in her new outfit. Her hair has been coiffed; straightened, neatly trimmed and shaped. She is sitting behind a FAKE microphone with WLOS on it, one hand clutching the mike pretending to talk.

FLASH -- the image FREEZES and we're NOW looking at a magazine ad with the caption beneath the photo:

DR. SHIRLEY TALK RADIO 89 CALL ME!

CUT TO:

9. RESTAURANT - "TOP OF THE HANCOCK"

As a VIOLINIST serenades Perlman, Alan and Shirley. Perlman lifts his champagne glass for a toast. Shirley's in another designer suit with her new coiffure. They all tap glasses. Shirley shoves her blouse collar down with her free hand, then sips her champagne.

CUT TO:

THE CITY FROM OVERHEAD - NIGHT

Shirley's city: a sea of shimmering lights. We MOVE IN on the Wrigley building...

SHIRLEY (V.O.)

...This is Dr. Shirley WLOS Talk Radio. That's all we have time for today...

(SHIRLEY'S THEME MUSIC fades in)
Thanks for all your calls...

...to a particular floor and into:

SHIRLEY'S STUDIO

as Shirley wraps up the show.

SHIRLEY

(polished)

...Please call me Monday. I want to listen to you. I hope you want to listen to me. See ya later.

Shirley, now the pro, cues Gordon. The BRASSY THEME music is potted up. She's off the air.

A month has passed. Shirley not only looks different but she has a presence she has never had before -- a sense of power and self-confidence. It's as if the program, not the clothes, has begun to "make the woman."

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY WLOS

Shirley in an Yves St. Laurent coat and a new pair of Halston heels is heading for the elevator.

(From now on, every time we see Shirley's feet she should be wearing a different pair of shoes.) People pop out of their offices to say goodnight...wish her a nice weekend. A SECRETARY, responsible for Shirley's mail is walking beside her.

SHIRLEY

...No let's forget that answer.
Tell her to ummm... What'd we say
in the last letter?

SECRETARY

(checks her pad)
'To stop blaming yourself and don't
think your hands are tied. Because
they never are.'

SHIRLEY

Use that. The rest is going to
have to wait till Monday.

Shirley steps into the elevator.

SECRETARY

Don't forget Alan's picking you up
for the Kup show at four tomorrow.
Oh, and that Alice woman called you
again. I told her she'd have to
call you on the air.

SHIRLEY

Great. Goodnight.

The doors slam shut.

SECRETARY

Goodnight.

CUT TO:

A COUNTRY ROAD, CATAHOULA, LOUISIANA - NIGHT

Rain pours down. Jack, in waist high wading boots, his khaki shirt soaked and splattered with mud, a broad brimmed jungle hat on his head, is in a phone booth with a leaking roof.

JACK

...No, I lost it all, Alex. My
suitcase, the notes, the camera,
the tapes, everything went under...
I don't know, the boat just flipped
over... Yeah, it's great down here.
They have bugs the size of softballs.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Just send me the airfare, would you...
I can't go back in, it's starting
to flood. What?... No, forget it,
I'll have to figure something out to
tell Cummings... What's that?
...You're going to send Finch down
with the airfare...that's...

Suddenly his hat brim, soaked from the water pouring in
the booth, collapses down in front of his face.

JACK

...very amusing, Alex...

CUT TO:

THE AIRPORT BUS - CHICAGO - SUNDAY MORNING

It pulls up in front of the Drake Hotel. A couple of
stewardesses file out followed by a businessman, and finally
Jack, still in his wading boots and mud splattered shirt.
The bus driver HONKS HIS HORN. Jack turns, his
jungle hat comes flying out the door. Jack catches it on
the fly, then heads toward his apartment.

CUT TO:

LINCOLN PARK

Filled with Sunday morning joggers. We spot Shirley,
breath pluming, running toward us along the edge of the
park. With her hair tucked beneath a ski cap and her
large oval sunglasses, it's hard to recognize her.

SHIRLEY'S POV of a RUNNER -- wearing a Dr. Shirley T-shirt
beneath an unzipped jogging jacket -- as he runs past her.

SHIRLEY

Hi, thanks!

The Runner glances back -- Shirley smiles. But he doesn't
recognize her, and keeps on going.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY, as she crosses the street and rounds the corner
heading for her apartment. She spots: Jack, still in his
bush outfit working on a newsrack. He comes down hard with
one fist, nudges the side with his knee, gives it a swift
kick from underneath -- it pops open. He pulls out the
Sun Times.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

You know you're really pretty good
at that.

Shirley is standing right behind him, peering over his shoulder. Jack turns around, bumps into her.

SHIRLEY

Hello.

(doesn't recognize
her yet)

It's me, remember?... I dropped
that champagne glass... I guess
I was pretty smashed.

Jack remembers now, but he has too much else on his mind,
doesn't want to deal with her.

JACK

Yeah sure...good to see you.

Jack glances down at his newspaper and starts down the street.
Shirley sticks with him.

SHIRLEY

That's some get up.

Jack looks up from his paper, but before he can respond
another jogger runs past them wearing a Dr. Shirley T-shirt
over her sweatshirt: TALK RADIO 89 on the front side;
DR. SHIRLEY, SHE CARES! on the back.

SHIRLEY

Jesus, I can't believe how many
people I've seen wearing them
today.

(then)

Do you listen a lot?

JACK

(baffled)

To what?

SHIRLEY

(points to receding
T-shirt)

The Dr. Shirley program.

JACK

What's that? One of those ca``
in shrink shows?

(casually)

That stuff is ridiculous...

SHIRLEY

That's what you think?

JACK

Trying to help some stranger by
talking to him for two minutes on
the radio...yeah, it's idiotic.

SHIRLEY

Four hundred thousand people happen
to disagree with you.

(quickly)

And that's in Cook County alone.

They start across the street.

JACK

(casually)

So there's a lot of suckers looking
for a quick fix...so what?

Shirley stops in the middle of the street.

SHIRLEY

All four hundred thousand are
suckers!

The light changes. Shirley doesn't move. The traffic
races toward them, horns screaming.

JACK

Jesus, would you come on!

Jack grabs her by the arm and pulls her to the far curb just
ahead of the traffic.

JACK

What's the matter with you?

SHIRLEY

(testily)

You really shouldn't talk about
something you don't know anything
about. And you can let go of my
arm now.

Jack does. They continue down the street.

JACK

Look it's just...

An OLD WOMAN stops to stare at Jack in his bush outfit.

JACK

(to woman)

Hi, how are you?

(she scuttles off; back
to Shirley)

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

It's just things have become so complicated that people are desperate for simple solutions. Look at all the self help books, the cults, the religious revival.

SHIRLEY

Is there anything you like that other people might like?

JACK

What kind of question is that? Listen, you like Dr. Shirley, that's great, that's wonderful. I'm sure it's a terrific program. But right now I'd just like to get home, okay?

Jack still can't figure out how he's become entangled in all this.

SHIRLEY

You still didn't answer my question.

JACK

(exasperated)

All right, okay. I like...Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall concert -- the Columbia recording... I like Uno's pizza...the Yankees when they lose --

SHIRLEY

(cutting him off)

Can't you just say what you like?... What are you so afraid of?

JACK

(truly baffled)

Now what are you talking about... That's what I like.

SHIRLEY

You really enjoy cutting things down, poking fun at people, don't you.

(then)

And what are you walking around like that for? What is it, some kind of disguise?

Shirley spots Alan's car sitting in front of her apartment. Without another word, she takes off.

JACK
(sincere)
Hey, come back. I'm sorry --

But she doesn't stop. Alan sees her coming.

ALAN
Hi. The Kup show called. They
moved your segment up and want
you to come in early. You better
hurry up and change.

Alan puts his arm around her. They start up the steps to
her apartment. Before going inside, Shirley glances over
her shoulder to see Jack still watching her at the far end
of the street.

CUT TO:

JACK, standing at the end of the block in his bush outfit.
An OLD MAN using a cane, hobbles past him.

OLD MAN
(doffs his cap)
Soldier.

He drops his cap back down and continues ambling down the
block.

CUT TO:

A TV STUDIO DRESSING ROOM - KUP SHOW

There's a make-up girl dabbing powder on Shirley's chin
and nose as Alan gives her some last minute words of
encouragement.

ALAN
...Shirley, I went over all the
questions with him.

Shirley, nervously gets up from her chair, oblivious to
the make-up girl who tries to follow her around the room.

SHIRLEY
But we weren't going to do any
direct interviews.

ALAN
This is different, Kup used to
work for the station. And, it's
great publicity for you.
(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)

(Shirley is still not convinced)
 ...Shirley, the only way you could get
 in trouble is if he sets down his
 clipboard which means he's going to
 ask something we didn't discuss. But
 he wouldn't pull anything like that
 on us...

CUT TO:

IRV KUPCINET SHOW - LIVE

KUP

...Which leads me to the following,
 Dr. Shirley...

IRV KUPCINET, a heavy set interrogator, known for his pug-
 nacious style SETS DOWN HIS CLIPBOARD on the coffee table
 in between their chairs.

KUP

Certainly you're aware of the furor
 that radio therapy has caused among
 professional psychiatric and
 psychological associations. How do
 you respond to it?

SHIRLEY

What do you mean?

ON ALAN AND LISA -- watching off stage. Trouble.

BACK TO SHIRLEY AND KUP

Kup leans back in his chair, crosses his feet at his ankles,
 he can sense the kill. Shirley nervous, does the same --
 leans back, crosses her feet at her ankles.

KUP

Specifically how it denigrates
 the profession, exploits it for
 commercial ends.

SHIRLEY

Is that what you think about it?
 Have you ever listened to my program...?

KUP

Not personally but --

SHIRLEY

That means no, right?

A few people in the audience laugh.

CUT TO:

WALLY'S - NIGHT

Popular, jammed, north side bar. We SPOT Jack and Alex squeezing their way through the crowd, drinking Becks. There's a TV SET above the bar with MTV on. Alex is discussing Jack's dilemma over blowing his latest assignment.

ALEX

...Just write a lot of travelogue stuff, throw in some quotes and turn it in.

JACK

No, screw it... I'm just going to be straight with him.

ALEX

(eyeing a passing woman)
You do that and you might as well pack your bags.

JACK

I don't have a bag anymore...

Alex spots two unattached WOMEN at the bar.

ALEX

There's two. Come on. I know 'em.
(Jack isn't interested)
Would you help me out here. It'll take your mind of work.

JACK

I'm not up for it.

ALEX

But it's right up your alley, some drinks, get laid -- no commitment. Come on, Jack.

Alex takes off. Jack lags behind sipping his beer. Alex says hello to the women, points toward Jack. Waves him over... Reluctantly Jack arrives.

ALEX

Maryanne, Linda, this is Jack.

JACK

Hi...

(spots something behind them)

Jesus...

(calls out to bartender)

Hey leave it there!

Jack takes off toward the TV. Alex looks at the women apologetically. Then turns toward the far end of the bar where Jack is glued to the TV -- it's Shirley on the Kup Show.

ON THE TV SCREEN - KUP AND SHIRLEY

SHIRLEY
(almost as if she were
speaking to Jack)
...But how can you criticize something
you haven't listened to?

She turns to the camera to emphasize her point. Unfortunately it's to the wrong camera.

KUP
But Dr. Shirley...

ON JACK

JACK
That's Dr. Shirley?

BARTENDER
Hey, where have you been?

CUT TO:

THE TV STUDIO

KUP
...These people are total strangers.
You have little or no knowledge of
their past, yet you try to analyze
and solve their problems -- in less
than five minutes. It makes me
extremely suspect.

SHIRLEY
Suspect? How can you suspect anything
you've never listened to?

The small studio audience applauds.

SHIRLEY
Hey, Kup -- Irv, people call me, okay?
I tell 'em what I think... I just hope
it helps 'em out, that's all. I don't
know all the answers.

KUP
I think you do more than that, but let
me attack it from another angle.

SHIRLEY

Attack, criticize, suspect... This
is some interview.

(then)

You think I'm some sorta screwpot --
screwball or somethin', don't ya?

(before he can respond)

No, no you don't have to say anything,
I know.

(then)

But my listeners don't and they're
the ones I care about.

More applause. Alan and Lisa begin to applaud. Shirley has
everyone in her hands.

SHIRLEY

(leans back in her chair)

So go ahead, go on

(tosses out her hands)

...bombs away... Let it rip.

Suddenly one of the false eyelashes she's had to wear for
the show swings down in front of her eye.

SHIRLEY

These things again, what a pain in
the ass...

Shirley tries to shove it back on, but it won't stay. The
TV CAMERA cuts to Kup.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

I don't know, you're awfully negative...
I wouldn't run a program like this.

Kup, embarrassed, takes a long sip of water.

BACK TO:

SHIRLEY, minus the false eyelashes.

SHIRLEY

(squinting at the monitor)

You have to go to commercial, Irv.

(swings around to face

the camera)

We'll be right back. Stay with us.

APPLAUSE. She swings her chair back to Kup. He's speechless.

CUT TO:

WALLY'S

Jack and Alex are sitting at the bar, they've been watching the interview like everyone else around them. Everyone is commenting how great she was...how they never miss her... really put Kup away. Alex's two women are long gone.

ALEX

...She didn't answer one of his questions.

JACK

(grinning)

Yeah, but she was great, Alex.

(laughs)

That's Dr. Shirley, I don't believe it...

ALEX

Great, maybe you should call her up and ask how we get those two girls back.

JACK

Huh?

(then)

No...I think I have a better idea.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shirley's in bed, the only light is the pale white glow of the TV. "Nightline" is on. She's not feeling so great about what happened on Kup -- the criticism is bugging her. She picks up the remote control and flicks to a different channel, landing on CARSON doing his fortune teller bit, complete with turban. He reads a question, gives an answer -- the audience laughs. Shirley punches the remote again, but it lands back on Carson. On Shirley, watching Carson. Back to Shirley, back to Carson, cracking the audience up again, hold, then:

CUT TO:

THE SUN TIMES - DAY

We spot Cummings heading toward the elevators.

JACK (O.S.)

Donald!

Through the thick crowd Cummings spots Jack hurrying toward him. Can't believe it. Jack's wading boots are slung over his shoulder.

CUMMINGS

You're supposed to be in --

JACK
(catching up to him)
I had a little accident, but forget
about that now.

CUT TO:

THE NEWS ROOM

Jack and Cummings are making their way across the crowded newsroom toward his office. Jack still has the boots slung over his shoulder.

CUMMINGS
...Where do you get the balls, Ryder?
You blow three weeks in Louisiana, then
come flying in here with this Dr. Shirley
idea, which you think is a great story
because you saw her looking through some
want-ads a couple of months ago... Besides
which, everybody else in town has run stories
on her. I'm tired of Dr. Shirley. Do you
get that? She bores me.

JACK
Look, I've read the other pieces, they're
PR releases. I'm talking about an
investigative piece, with a direct
interview.

CUMMINGS
She doesn't give them.

He disappears into his office. Jack trails him inside.

JACK
Doesn't that tell you anything? Look,
she doesn't know I'm a reporter. I'll
get an interview and do a strong piece
on this whole circus... Trust me.

CUMMINGS
That's reassuring.
(after a long beat, maybe
Jack does have something)
All right...okay, on one condition. If
you don't pull it off, you go to Conklin
yourself and resign.

JACK
(beat)
You have yourself a deal.

Jack hurries out. Suddenly reappears, dumps the wading boots
on Cummings' desk.

JACK

I don't need these anymore. Property
of the Chicago Sun Times.

And he's out the door.

CUT TO:

THE CORRIDOR WLOS

Alan and Shirley round the corner, hurrying toward the studio.
She's late.

ALAN

...What are you talking about? Shirley
do you know how many calls we had this
morning? You buried Kup, the audience
loved you.

SHIRLEY

Sure the audience loved me, but some
of the stuff Kup was saying about
responsibility...and this whole doctor
business...I just don't know Alan...

Alan slides his arm around her. Lowers his voice.

ALAN

Listen, you're not supposed to know about
this, but there is a serious discussion in
New York about you going network...Fifty-
seven affiliates across the country.
Millions of listeners, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

That's...that's great, Alan, but --

ALAN

If we can build up the local ratings,
we have a great shot at it. And I'd
be locked for a network job.

SHIRLEY

Sure but --

From the wall speaker: the radio station. We HEAR the
lead in tape for Shirley's program.

ALAN

(oblivious)

The listeners adore you, Shirley, that's
all that matters.

(they arrive at the studio)

Don't forget we have the party tonight.

(MORE)

ALAN (CONT'D)
(kisses her)
Have a good show.

And he's off.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

Shirley listening to another call but she's still thinking about the questions Kup raised.

CALLER
...So I told my boyfriend off.
I mean, I just went out there and
honked my horn for once. Just like
you said...I can't tell you how great
I feel, Dr. Shirley... You know, me
and my friends really idolize you.

SHIRLEY
(not wanting to hear that)
Well...I wouldn't want to be idolized
or nothing, Lois, but thanks for
listenin' and...and callin' in.

Hold on Shirley for a beat, then:

CUT TO:

INSIDE JACK'S VW

As he drives down Wells Street heading toward the station.
His radio on.

RADIO/CALLER
Dr. Shirley, this is Alice. I uh
tried callin' you a lot before but
not on the radio.

SHIRLEY
Sure... Hi, Alice. I'm sorry but you
know I can't take calls off the air,
I'd be here all night. But I'm glad
you called me now.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

RADIO/CALLER
...I listen to you all the time, I
just think you're the greatest.

SHIRLEY
Thanks.

ALICE
(suddenly, her tone changes;
sounds very upset)
Dr. Shirley... I, I got to talk to
someone so badly, I...

She starts to cry.

ON NANCY who signals Shirley to cut her off. Shirley
ignores her.

SHIRLEY
I'm here, Alice, take your time.

CALLER
I don't think...
(choking on her words)
I don't think I can say it on the
radio...

More sobbing.

SHIRLEY
Come on, take your time...try, Alice.

Suddenly Shirley's theme MUSIC bursts on. Nancy had Gordon
cut her off.

SHIRLEY
(to Gordon over intercom)
What happened?

Gordon makes a cutting gesture. Points at Nancy's booth.

INSIDE NANCY'S BOOTH

Nancy is screening the next call as Shirley bursts in.

SHIRLEY
You don't cut people off like that.

NANCY
(cups her hand over mouthpiece)
She was incoherent.

SHIRLEY
You don't think I can decide that?
It was the first real call I've had all
afternoon. Everything else was nonsense.

NANCY
They're not nonsense, they're positive calls,
Shirley. It's like getting free advertising,
that's all.

SHIRLEY

Well forget the advertising -- I'm not interested. And don't cut someone off again like that, understand?

Gordon comes over the speakers: "15 seconds."

NANCY

(biting her tongue)

I understand.

Shirley storms out. Nancy and Gordon exchange glances.

CUT TO:

EXT. WRIGLEY BUILDING - NIGHT

Shirley and Alan step out of the building. Shirley, not wanting to be recognized, slips on her sunglasses.

ALAN

...I'll drop you off, then swing back for you in half an hour.

SHIRLEY

I want to talk to you about Nancy.

ALAN

I heard about it. Can we save it till after the party.

SHIRLEY

Do I have to go to this thing?

ALAN

Shirley I want you to meet some of my friends. Let's just forget about the station for a while, and have a nice night out, all right?

Before Shirley can respond: From off screen:

JACK (O.S.)

Dr. Shirley!

Jack catches up to them. Now it's Shirley who doesn't want to have anything to do with him. Tries to ignore him.

JACK

I'm sorry about the other day. You could've said something you know.

SHIRLEY

And spoil your fun.

JACK

I was in a lousy mood. I said I'm sorry. I'd like to make it up to you.

ALAN

Would you leave her alone, friend.

JACK

I'd like to speak to her for a minute.

ALAN

So would a lot of people.

Shirley slips into the waiting cab. Alan slides in after her.

JACK

Come on, I just --

ALAN

Just call her on the air.

Alan pulls the door shut. Jack raps on the glass.

JACK

No, you don't understand. Roll down your window.

INSIDE THE TAXI

ALAN

You know this guy?

SHIRLEY

More or less.

JACK

(through the glass)
Five minutes!

ALAN

1200 Lake Shore.

The cab pulls away from the curb. Jack suddenly realizes that the bottom corner of his jacket is caught in the door.

JACK

Hey wait!

ALAN

(to driver)
Keep on going.

Jack tries to yank his coat free, can't. Starts running alongside, grabbing the door handle.

SHIRLEY'S POV OF JACK -- running alongside the cab, shouting. She can't hear him. ...A tearing sound...Jack is left standing in the street with the corner of his jacket torn off.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT LAKE SHORE DRIVE - NIGHT

A cocktail party. Young, hip wealthy guests revolve around the spacious high rise apartment which has a panoramic view of the city below. The music is progressive Jazz. The walls are covered with New German Realist paintings. We SPOT Alan and Shirley walking in down the foyer. Shirley is way out of her element, and she already knows it.

SHIRLEY

...Alan, I really don't feel like being here.

ALAN

(starts to help her out of
her coat)

These are interesting people. You're going to enjoy yourself. Promise.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHIRLEY, who has been cornered by DIANA, a leggy blond in a strapless dress with a long strand of pearls dangling from her neck.

DIANA

...I'm a tremendous fan of yours...

Diana's leaning against the wall with the palm of her hand. Her face inches from Shirley's.

DIANA

...I don't care what they say about you, you're fabulous. That call yesterday about the woman in love with her brother...I couldn't stop laughing.

SHIRLEY

(awkwardly)

Well thank you...thanks a lot.

Shirley takes a long sip of her drink.

DIANA

(spotting someone)

Michael!

Dr. Michael Turner, drink in hand, comes over.

DIANA

Michael, this is Dr. Shirley.

(to Shirley)

Dr. Turner's in your field. He's on the psychiatric staff at Northwestern.

SHIRLEY
Nice to meet you.

TURNER
(very cool)
Yes, I've heard of you.
(abruptly)
Excuse me, would you.

Shirley watches him walk over to another couple and begin talking. She gets the message. A waiter sweeps by. Shirley plucks another drink off the the tray and swills it down.

THE COUCH - LATER

Shirley is sitting in the middle of the couch, wedged between two woman, encircled by half dozen other guests cradling their drinks. A heavy set MAN wearing a gold chain around his neck and a gold I.D. bracelet, is engaged in an intense discussion with her.

MAN
...I mean essentially life isn't that complicated is it doctor? You're born, you try to get laid, you put on some weight, you die. That's the essence of it, right?
(cutting off her response)
And if that's it, I mean ultimately, what do we need all these shrinks for?

SHIRLEY
Well I think there's more --

MAN
(interrupting)
I know, I know you were going to say there's love, too, weren't you?
(cuts her off again)
But do you honestly believe in it anymore, doctor? Can you?

SHIRLEY
You don't believe --

MAN
I believe in relationships; I believe in passion; I believe in marriage -- but love... Today, 1983? It can't sustain itself. Essentially it's an anachronism, right?

Another WAITER sweeps by; Shirley grabs another drink. Quaffs it down. It's getting to be a long night.

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY

Shirley looking for a place to escape to. She opens the bedroom door at the end of the hall.

INSIDE THE BEDROOM

Four people are sitting around the bed, snorting Coke. One of them is Diana from the earlier scene.

DIANA

(glancing up)

Hi...come in and have some.

SHIRLEY

(resting her hand on her chest)

Oh no thanks, I'm stuffed.

Not quite what she meant to say. She steps out, closes the door behind her. Pause. Then

CUT TO:

INSIDE A TAXI

Going home. Shirley's eyes are shut; she's resting her head on the back of the seat. Alan is sitting beside her.

ALAN

You were a hit.

SHIRLEY

I felt like a clown.

ALAN

They admire you, Shirley.

The kind of admiration she doesn't want.

ALAN

(slides his arm around her)

You know, I'm going to forget about what happened between you and Nancy today, okay?

SHIRLEY

(opens her eyes; turns toward him)

You're going to forget about it?

ALAN

When the callers get like that, you have to cut them off. We're trying to put you over the top. It's bad for the show.

SHIRLEY

(sitting up)

But I was in the middle of talking to her... She was in tears, Alan. I don't care if it was bad for the show.

The car swings onto Shirley's block.

ALAN

Honey, it's a business. Entertainment. The callers want you to tell them they're okay. They eat up your cracker barrel philosophy... You sell a lot of ads. Don't try to make it into something it's not.

SHIRLEY

(suddenly livid)

I didn't hear that.

ALAN

What? What's the matter?

Shirley leans forward to the driver:

SHIRLEY

Stop right here.

CUT TO:

JACK'S APARTMENT WINDOW

His feet are resting on the windowsill. He rubs out the last of several cigarettes in the ashtray on his lap...then sees what he's been waiting for.

Shirley, on the street below. She's climbed out of the cab. Alan is pursuing her down the street, trying to stop her.

CUT TO:

ELM STREET

ALAN

Would you please stop. You know what I meant. I didn't mean it like 'at.

SHIRLEY

(backpedaling)

Would you go home. This -- 'cracker barrel' is tired, okay.

ALAN

Shirley, would you stop acting crazy.

He catches up to her, tries to put his arm around her waist.

SHIRLEY

(slips away; continues walking)
Now I'm crazy.

ALAN

You're upset over nothing.

SHIRLEY

Get lost, Alan.

JACK (O.S.)

I think she wants to be left alone.

SHIRLEY

Oh great...great...

ALAN

What is he doing here? Get out of here.

SHIRLEY

(sensing trouble)
Say look, I'm going home...

Shirley starts off again. Alan grabs her by the arm.

ALAN

I'm not letting you go like this.

JACK

Can't you just leave her alone.

Jack grabs Alan's arm and tries to pull him away. Shirley, trying to shake free, spins around and accidentally hits Alan right in the eye with her elbow.

ALAN

Jesus...

Alan covers his eye with the palm of his hand. A small trickle of blood begins to run from his nose.

SHIRLEY

Oh God...are you okay?

Shirley moves toward him. Alan holds out his free hand as if to say "stay away."

JACK

(to Shirley; sotto)
You really popped him.

The cab driver across the street honks.

CAB DRIVER

I'm taking off!

ALAN
No. Wait, I'm coming.

SHIRLEY
Alan I'm really --

ALAN
I'm fine Shirley... I'm okay.
(heads toward the taxi)
Just forget it. I'll see you
tomorrow.

He passes Jack.

JACK
It's been wild...

Alan ignores him, climbs into the cab. The cab pulls away.
Shirley watches it disappear around the corner.

SHIRLEY
You're sure he's all right?

JACK
Sure... He'll just have an eye the
size of a golfball tomorrow.

SHIRLEY
Yeah, well...thanks. Goodnight.

She starts toward her apartment building.

JACK
I still owe you a drink.

SHIRLEY
You don't owe me anything.

JACK
(holds up the corner
of his torn coat)
Okay then, you owe me one.

SHIRLEY
I'll pay for it, call my office.

JACK
Say, I listened to you on the radio
the other day.

SHIRLEY
Great. Goodnight.

JACK
You're very good.

Shirley eyes him skeptically.

SHIRLEY
That another line?

JACK
Can't I make a mistake.
(she's still not convinced)
Then don't believe me and let me buy you
one... I'm not as dangerous as you are.

Shirley starts to smile and we

CUT TO:

INT. AMBASSADOR EAST

Jack and Shirley are at a cocktail table in the bar. There's a dining room across the way with a small BAND and a dance floor. Shirley finishes her bourbon and water. Jack signals the waiter for another.

SHIRLEY
...It's just gotten real crazy
all of a sudden.

JACK
How come?

SHIRLEY
It's a lot of things...You know some
woman called me from Gary yesterday
and told me I saved her life...That's
a little scary...

JACK
You mean the responsibility is scary?

We DROP beneath the table to SEE Jack jotting down some notes on a napkin on his thigh.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
I shouldn't be talking about this.

BACK TO SHIRLEY AND JACK

JACK
Why?

SHIRLEY
(beat)
Because.
(suspiciously)
Why are you so interested?

JACK
(not missing a beat)
I'm a writer. I'm curious about
a lot of things.

SHIRLEY
Yeah, right, I used to see you typing
from my window... What do you type?

JACK
I'm working on a novel about a kid who
drops out of an Ivy league school to play
ball and winds up in the minor leagues.

SHIRLEY
Was that you?

JACK
(laughs)
I played some triple A ball...

SHIRLEY
What happened?

JACK
You're very good you know that?
(then)
My slider stopped sliding, my fastball
wasn't fast enough. I was cut.

SHIRLEY
How soon will you be done with it?

JACK
The novel?... Soon... Pretty soon.
Now what about you? What were you
doing before all this?

The question makes her a bit uneasy. She's now watching
the couples dancing in the dining room across the hall.

SHIRLEY
Oh...a lot of things...
(watching the dancers)
There's something I haven't done in a while.

JACK
(glances over her shoulder)
You dance?

CUT TO:

THE DANCE FLOOR

Jack's loafer's nudging Shirley's heels.

JACK (O.S.)
You started to say something about
where you lived?

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Watch what you're doing.

On Shirley and Jack dancing. Jack's not very good.

JACK
Do you mind if I lead?

SHIRLEY
Sure.

JACK
About where you lived before coming
to Chicago?

SHIRLEY
(stops dancing)
Look, what are you trying to do?

Jack can't believe it -- she's on to him already. But:

SHIRLEY
A Fox-Trot, Rock step, what are
you trying to do?

JACK
I'm just trying to dance.

SHIRLEY
That's the problem... Now watch me.
Start with your left...then slide,
together, rock, back, then slide
together...now you try it.

Jack does.

SHIRLEY
Not bad...

She takes his hand, puts her other hand on his waist. She
leads now.

SHIRLEY
Stay with me now.

JACK
You don't think I can dance, do you?

SHIRLEY
No...and rock, back, slide together...
That's better. Let me out now.

11/11/11

11/11/11

11/11/11

11/11/11

Points down the block. Jack shakes his head. No. She insists. He shakes his head again. Finally she takes him by the arm and leads him off down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

A SNOWBALL - bursting against a brick wall.

JACK (O.S.)

(after a pause)

No...no that, that was a fastball.

Jack and Shirley are standing on the curb of this residential street. It's now after THREE A.M. They're both loaded, making a fair amount of noise. Jack packs another snowball and hands it to her. He's showing Shirley how to pitch.

JACK

You have to put your index finger like this...your thumb out to the side...

(she does it)

That's it. Now we're on fire.

She winds up, then lets it fly. It smacks against the wall. Pause. Jack considers it.

JACK

(shakes his head)

Outside.

MAN (O.S.)

That's gonna be it for tonight.

They turn to see a COP standing behind them, his patrol car parked down the block. Jack can't believe it.

JACK

Hands above our head?

COP

(doesn't appreciate his humor)

It's after three. This is a residential neighborhood. Do you have some I.D.?

JACK

Are you kidding me? I.D.?

(turns to Shirley)

Is he kidding me?

SHIRLEY

(the cop's losing his patience)

Jack...

Shirley hands the cop her license. Reluctantly, Jack also pulls his out and hands it to him. Jack is about to say something else but Shirley shoots him a look that says, "stop."

COP
(glancing up)
Shirley Kenton... Dr. Shirley Kenton?

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT

The cop car is now parked in front. Jack is leaning against her building, hands stuffed in his pants pockets. He's obviously been waiting a long time. Shirley finally climbs out of the front seat.

SHIRLEY
Goodnight, Phil, and call me, let
me know what happens. All right?

COP
I'll do that. Thanks.
(Shirley starts toward Jack)
Hey don't forget these!
(holding out their licenses)

Jack and Shirley return to the car and take their licenses. Neither of them pays attention. Jack slides his in his pants pocket, Shirley drops hers in her bag.

COP
Goodnight.

The cop drives off. Taps his horn. Shirley waves then turns to Jack; she knows what he's thinking.

SHIRLEY
It was a good thing he recognized
me, he probably would've taken you in...

JACK
So I guess I owe you another one.
...How about dinner tomorrow night?

SHIRLEY
Tomorrow?... Sure, that would be nice.

JACK
Say about seven. And Shirley, this
time I'm not going to do all the talking.

SHIRLEY
Okay...(she kisses him) You know you
can come up if you like.

Jack would like to, but he's already starting to feel like a heel.

JACK
I'll see you tomorrow, okay?

He takes off. Shirley doesn't get it; she's a little disappointed as she watches him cross the street. Hold, then:

CUT TO:

INSIDE JACK'S APARTMENT

He flips on his radio to the jazz station, turns on the light above his desk, slips out of his coat. He pulls out the napkins he made notes on from the Ambassador East, then his driver's license -- except it's a Minnesota license, the Cop handed him the wrong one.

INSERT LICENSE : Shirley Kenton
 404 Birch Road
 Fergus Falls, Minn. 20012

No phone number, only a photo of a Shirley from three years ago, with very long hair and little make-up.

Jack sinks down into his chair, stares at the license, starting to wonder what he has gotten himself into. Hold then:

FADE OUT.

FADE IN TO:

SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A sliver of early morning light slips between the curtains. Someone is knocking at her door. She rolls over trying to ignore it. The knocking continues... She drags herself out of bed, stumbles over the thirty odd pair of shoes spread around the floor...grabs her robe.

THE APARTMENT DOOR

as Shirley peers through the peep hole, to See Jack, standing across the hall, waiting.

SHIRLEY (sotto)
Oh God...Jack?
(then)
Wait a minute! Just a minute!

She dashes back to...

THE BATHROOM

...where she tries to do everything at once; brush her hair, put on blush-on, lipstick...

INSIDE THE FRONT DOOR

Shirley, zipping up her skirt, wearing mismatched flats on her feet, scrambling for the door. Opens it.

JACK

Hi. I just wanted to return this.
 (pulls out her license)
 The cop mixed them up. You must
 have mine.

SHIRLEY

(disappointed)
 Oh sure...sure. Why don't you come
 in for a sec and I'll get it.

Jack steps in. Shirley disappears into the bedroom.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

I can't believe you're up so early...
 I drank too much...danced too much...

Jack sits on the couch. Takes a look around: no books, a
 few magazines: Cosmopolitan, Newsweek, Redbook... Shirley
 reappears with his license.

SHIRLEY

(handing it to him)
 You want a cup of coffee or something?

Jack notices a few dots of mascara on Shirley's cheek.

JACK

(pointing at his own cheek)
 Sure... You have a little something...
 little further to the right.

Shirley spots it in the mirror above the sofa. Rubs it off
 with her finger. PAUSE.

SHIRLEY

So, I'll...uh, get the coffee.

She starts toward the kitchen. Someone KNOCKS at the door.

SHIRLEY

Busy morning.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY opening the door. A girl in a badly worn overcoat,
 white boots and a bright red purse is standing in front of
 her. This is ALICE, 19, short, perky, a dark bruise on one
 of her cheeks.

ALICE

Dr. Shirley?
 (nervously)
 My name is Alice.

Shirley doesn't immediately recall her.

ALICE
I got cut off a few days ago.
I tried calling back, but they
wouldn't let me talk to ya.

SHIRLEY
Alice... Sure... They wouldn't let
you talk to me?

ALICE
No ma'am... So I followed you home
one night.

Alice spots Jack sitting on the couch.

ALICE
God, I shouldn't have come, I'm sorry.

SHIRLEY
Well look...just give me one minute, okay?

She shuts the door.

CUT TO:

THE APARTMENT

Jack is trying to convince Shirley not to get involved
with Alice.

SHIRLEY
...But she's here now, what am I
supposed to do?

JACK
You don't know who she is... She
could be dangerous.
(Shirley doesn't buy it)
All right, at least let me take
both of you to breakfast.

SHIRLEY
(shakes her head)
I'll see you for dinner, Jack.

Jack realizes it's hopeless.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR as Jack steps out with Shirley. Alice is
standing across the hall.

JACK
How you doing Alice?
(shakes her hand)
Jack. Take it easy on her, okay?

SHIRLEY

Jack...

He holds up his hands. Starts down the hall. Shirley turns back to Alice. Smiles.

SHIRLEY

Don't worry about him, come on in.

CUT TO:

THE APARTMENT

Shirley and Alice are having coffee.

ALICE

...I sent for your picture, but you're even prettier in person -- no foolin'.

SHIRLEY

Thanks.

(sets down her coffee)

Alice...what'd you want to see me about?

Alice ashamed, looks down at her coffee.

SHIRLEY

Look, I'd like to try and help,
but you've got to tell me something.

ALICE

(it's hard for her)

It's about me and my husband, Richard...

CUT TO:

ELM STREET

Shirley and Alice are walking down the street.

SHIRLEY

...Does he drink all the time?

ALICE

A lot of the time, yeah...

Jack steps out of the coffee shop across the street. Shirley spots him. Jack rolls his eyes. Shirley shrugs, then turns back to Alice.

JACK'S POV of the two women as they continue down the street talking, then disappear around the corner.

CUT TO:

THE LA SALLE STREET BRIDGE

As Shirley and Alice start across the bridge on this chilly November day.

ALICE

And when he gets real drunk...
he starts to hit me... Sometimes
he hits me so hard... That's why
I had to stop going to work. My
face was so messed up, my eyes would
be swollen shut... And to have all
those people staring at you... knowing...
(on the verge of tears)

Oh shit...

(then)

So finally they fired me. God, I'm
sorry.

SHIRLEY

For what?

ALICE

For troublin' you with all this.
(tries to force a laugh)
I just can't get another job, I
don't have any money... And when
Rich comes home and finds out...
(then)
I'm really scared.

Alice turns away from Shirley and walks to the edge of the
bridge.

ALICE

I don't think I can handle it.

Shirley walks up behind her.

SHIRLEY

Yes you can. We just got to put
our heads together, that's all...

Alice turns around, on the verge of tears, then suddenly
reaches out and puts her arms around Shirley. Shirley is
genuinely touche' -- in a way that she hasn't been in a
long time... She embraces the young girl. A girl who in
many ways reminds Shirley of herself a few years ago. Stay
with them for a few seconds, then:

CUT TO:

EXT. STATE STREET

The street is strung with Christmas lights, the stores filled
with Christmas displays.

We SPOT Shirley and Alice in the crowd. Shirley is talking, gesticulating in all directions. Alice is laughing. They stop in front of Ernie's coffee shop. One of the original greasy spoons. Shirley peers into the window.

SHIRLEY

...I don't know how long it's been since I've had a real hamburger. You up for it?

ALICE

Sure, Shirley...

CUT TO:

INSIDE ERNIE'S

A real dive. Shirley and Alice are sitting on torn counter stools having the greatest, greasiest hamburger we've ever seen, and they couldn't be enjoying it more.

ALICE

...Is Jack you're boyfriend?... He seems pretty neat.

SHIRLEY

Jack? No he's just a friend.

ALICE

You really like him don't you?

SHIRLEY

(smiling)

Yeah...yeah I do like him. He makes me laugh.

(finishing her hamburger)

You know these are unbelievable...I'm having another one, how 'bout you?

ALICE

(laughs)

That'll be your third.

SHIRLEY

You'll split it with me.

(to the waitress)

Another one, please.

(to Alice)

Maybe we should get some fries?

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE ERNIE'S - LATER

As Alice and Shirley walk out.

Alice is now talking, Shirley laughs. Alice lights two cigarettes and hands one to Shirley as they disappear around the corner.

CUT TO:

A PHONE BOOTH - RUSH STREET

Shirley hangs up the phone, tears off a piece of paper from her notepad. Alice is standing behind her. A taxi is waiting nearby.

SHIRLEY

This is the shelter number. You have an eleven o'clock appointment tomorrow. If anything happens before then, you know where to reach me.

(hands her the paper)

Promise me you'll go.

ALICE

I will, I promise.

Alice climbs into the waiting cab. It pulls away.

SHIRLEY

Don't forget to call me!

Shirley watches the taxi until it disappears around the corner.

CUT TO:

THE SUN TIMES - DAY

Jack on the phone at his desk. A Minnesota phone book and a legal pad with a dozen numbers, most of them scratched off, sit on the desk.

JACK

...That's right, Shirley Kenton...

Yes, but it's the only address I have --

(another line buzzes)

Hold on a minute.

(hits the other line)

Ryder... Who?

(glances down his list)

Girardi, Girardi... Yes I did, I did leave a message. You're at Arthur

Murray, right?

(sits up)

She did teach for you?... That's great.

Hold on a second. (hits the other line)

So long.

(MORE)

JACK
 (hits Girardi again)
 Yes, Mr. Girardi... And who's that?...
 Her boyfriend?
 (writing it down)
 Steve Labell... Do you happen to
 have his number?

CUT TO:

ENGINEER'S BOOTH - WLOS - DAY

Shirley is hanging up her scarf and coat. Nancy walks in, carrying a cup of coffee.

NANCY
 ...Hi, where were you yesterday,
 we had the promos to do, remember?

Shirley's lead in tape can be heard over the speaker.

SHIRLEY
 I was with Alice. Remember Alice?
 The girl you cut off. She said she
 called back a half dozen times but
 you wouldn't put her on.

NANCY
 Jesus, there're hundreds of people
 I don't put through, who the hell
 is Alice?

Shirley walks into the studio. Puts on her headphones.

SHIRLEY
 (over the intercom)
 I'll take whatever you have up, Nancy.
 But after that I don't want any calls
 screened.

NANCY
 Are you nuts? It's the holidays, you'll
 get every depressed crazy in the city.

Shirley takes off her headphones. Stands up. The show's
 about to begin.

NANCY
 All right...okay.

Shirley sits down. Puts on her headphones. Gordon cues
 Shirley -- she's on the air.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY IN THE BOOTH - LATER

Shirley listening to another unscreened call. It's been a long afternoon, but she's determined to talk to everyone and anyone.

CALLER

...Every time I take her out of the hospital she tries to slit her wrist. I keep on feeling guilty, but it's not my fault, is it?

SHIRLEY

Jim, I'm glad you called.

(Nancy watching, horrified)

We have some good referrals for you but first we should talk a little. Okay?

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY

Her back against the wall, standing on one leg. We're now in PERLMAN'S OFFICE.

NANCY

...two suicide threats, a terminal cancer patient...

SHIRLEY

She was depressed.

NANCY

Who isn't.

Perlman's behind his desk. Alan on the couch, his eye swollen to the size of a golfball.

ALAN

Why don't we all slow down here.

SHIRLEY

(to Nancy)

You never wanted me on in the first place.

NANCY

Because I knew something like this would happen.

(Shirley switches the leg she's standing on, switches right back)
You want to save the world, you do it on your own time, not on the air, Shirley.
You're a success because I choose the right calls and Mr. Perlman hired a good PR firm.
(then)
You're not qualified to help these people.

SHIRLEY

Yeah, well I seem to be doing okay.

PERLMAN

Shirley, you're responsible to the management of this station.

SHIRLEY

No...no I'm sorry, but remember, you and Alan said our first responsibility was to the listener. That they were more important than any of us...I'm just being responsible to them.

NANCY

Jesus...

ALAN

Come on Shirley, you don't want to jeopardize our chances of going national do you?

SHIRLEY

I just want to talk to the people who want to call me, Alan...That's all...

PERLMAN

(irate)

'Dr. Shirley,' you were a God damn receptionist here three months ago -- a fired receptionist as I remember. Now you can walk out of here right now and be back there, or let Nancy start screening calls again.

(pause)

It's up to you.

Shirley switches the leg she's standing on. Switches right back. Pause. Then:

SHIRLEY

My callers are waiting, Mr. Perlman.

She opens the door and walks out, leaving the door open behind her.

CUT TO:

THE CORRIDOR

Shirley is walking like a condemned woman down the empty corridor expecting Perlman to step out and fire her at any moment...

CUT BACK TO:

PERLMAN'S OFFICE

NANCY

...But Gene, she's out of control.

PERLMAN

And she has the highest rated show we've ever had. Who are you going to replace her with?

(then)

She has handled everything so far, hasn't she?

(pause)

Besides... She walked out on me.

(a smile sweeps across his face)

She walked out on me.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY ON THE AIR - LATER

Her THEME music is playing. She's out of time, but the call lights are all illuminated.

SHIRLEY

...We're out of time but so many of you haven't gotten through today, I'm going to stay after and you can continue to call me at...

CUT TO:

NANCY'S BOOTH

She's watching as Shirley gives her after hour phone number.

NANCY

Save us, save us Mother Mary,
we are lost...

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S OFFICE

She's on the phone, taking the calls she didn't have time for on the air. The desk is littered with half empty coffee cups, and stacks of mail.

SHIRLEY

(into phone)

...Nothing I can say is going to make it better, Ruby, but...

The RECEPTIONIST pokes her head in.

RECEPTIONIST

Shirley, a guy named Jack called --
I couldn't get through to you. He
said he couldn't make dinner tonight.

SHIRLEY

(clamps her hand over mouthpiece)
Did he say where I could reach him?

RECEPTIONIST

No, he just said he was sorry, something
came up.

CUT TO:

MAIN STREET - FERGUS FALLS - DUSK

And the ARTHUR MURRAY DANCE STUDIO sign, still missing its
final O.

CUT TO:

A BAR - NEXT DOOR

It's after five, crowded with workers. We SPOT Jack, his
tape recorder on the table in front of him, finishing up
his interview with Steve Labell, Shirley's ex-boyfriend.
RANDY is sitting on Steve's lap.

STEVE

(looking at the magazine ads
Jack brought of Shirley)
...Like I said, if you hadn't showed
me these I wouldn't've ever believed
you... 'Dr. Shirley,' Jesus.
(laughs)
...Man, you guys must be nuts down there...

Jack clicks off his tape.

JACK

That's fine. You've been a great help.
And thanks for the other names.
(lifts his 35mm camera)
You mind if I take one?

RANDY

Oh yeah, go on.

Randy puts horns behind Steve's head.

JACK

That's fresh.

FLASH!

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She's looking out her window down at Jack's dark apartment. She's just called him: we hear his voice on the tape, then the BEEP:

SHIRLEY

Jack, it's me again, Shirley. Just callin' to see if you're back... No, huh,...all right, bye (quickly)
274-3323 Bye.

Hangs up. Hold then:

CUT TO:

WRIGLEY BUILDING ELEVATORS - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Shirley hurries into an empty elevator that goes up to the station. Just as the doors are about to close, a MAN steps in.

INSIDE THE ELEVATOR

Going up. Silence. The man is in his thirties, tall, thin, with a sallow complexion. After a few beats:

MAN

You really got some nerve, don't you...

SHIRLEY

What's that?

MAN

You know I don't go messin' around with your business. Why do you go messin' around with mine?

SHIRLEY

Look, I don't know what you're talking about.

He steps toward her. Shirley steps back.

MAN

Alice doesn't want to see you anymore.

SHIRLEY

You're her husband?... Are you Richard?

MAN

You people are something else. Just because you got some fancy degree and make lots of money, you think you got the answer to everything, don't ya?

SHIRLEY
Is she okay?

MAN
Don't you!

SHIRLEY
No, no I don't... I'd just like to
know if she's all right.

MAN
Everything would be fine if you'd
just stay out of it. You didn't have
to send her to no shelter.

SHIRLEY
Where is she?

MAN
Listen, lady. I don't want you talking
to her. I don't want you trying to see
her. Just stay...

The elevator doors open to the WLOS reception area.

MAN
...out of it. It's none of your
God damn business!

Heads turn. Shirley steps out of the elevator. He remains
inside, punches the down button.

SHIRLEY
I'd like to hear her say that.

The elevator doors shut. He's gone. Shirley doesn't move.

RECEPTIONIST
You okay?

She's not, but she nods.

CUT TO:

INSIDE SHIRLEY'S OFFICE

She slowly opens the door. Flips on the light.

A DOZEN PEOPLE: "Congratulations!"

There's a cake in the middle of the room in the shape of the
U.S. with DR. SHIRLEY #1 CHICAGO #1 USA on top.

There are people from the station, a photographer, camera
newsteam.

PR
Smile, Dr. Shirley.

The photographer begins snapping photos. The TV crew turns on their spot. This is the last thing Shirley's in the mood for.

SHIRLEY
What's going on?

PERLMAN
(squeezes her shoulder)
We did it, Shirley. Taking those unscreened calls was a great idea. We went through the roof in the latest arbitrons. New York wants you to go national next week. Fifty-seven affiliates!

Alan comes up and kisses her on the cheek.

ALAN
It worked like a charm, Shirley.
Now you can take it easy.

Several other people rush up and congratulate her. Shirley's in a daze. Still thinking about Alice's husband.

PR WOMAN
Let's get one of the three of you together... Put your arms around her...that's it.

More pictures, as Alan and Perlman stand on either side of her. The PR woman hands Shirley a cake cutter.

PR WOMAN
Cut the cake, Dr. Shirley.

Without looking, holding the knife with both hands, she slices down into the cake, lopping off Florida.

NEWSCAMERAMAN
Excuse me, we missed that, you think you could do it again?

Shirley lifts the knife way up in the air, and slowly slices down into Minnesota.

NEWSCAMERAMAN
Great!

CLOSE ON SHIRLEY, then:

CUT TO:

A SIGN OUTSIDE O'HARE AIRPORT - DAY

WELCOME TO CHICAGO
MAYOR WASHINGTON

CAB DRIVER (O.S.)
...You have a good trip?

A taxi streaks past the sign, heading toward the city.

INSIDE THE TAXI

Jack is sitting in the back seat with his briefcase and overnight bag beside him.

JACK
(enthusiastically)
Great, thanks.

Jack's ebullient, Fergus Falls has been a windfall. The driver has his dispatch radio turned down, his AM radio is playing softly: tail end of Pan Am commercial.

CAB DRIVER
Business or pleasure?

Now, on the radio: "Hi, this is WLOS talk 89. I'm Dr. Shirley and you're on the air...Hello? ...""Shirley, this is Alice..."

JACK
Business.
(then)
You listen to this a lot?

CAB DRIVER
If I'm in the cab, sure... She's a sweet lady.

A Cadillac cuts dangerously in front of the cab. The cabbie leans on his horn.

CAB DRIVER
Asshole...

On Jack for a beat listening to the radio, then:

CUT TO

SHIRLEY IN THE BOOTH

Listening to Alice.

ALICE/RADIO
...I can't talk to ya long, Shirley.
I know Rich came to see ya.

SHIRLEY
Are you all right? I tried calling
you but you weren't listed.

Gordon glances at Nancy; she doesn't know what's going on
either.

ALICE
Oh yeah, sure, it's all right. I --
I just can't talk to ya no more, that's
all. Thanks for everything. It's gonna
be all right now.

Shirley isn't convinced yet.

SHIRLEY
Alice, tell me what happened?

ALICE
Nothing. There's nothing to worry
about. I just hope Rich didn't
embarrass you or anything. I gotta
go now, Shirley. Merrry Christmas.

SHIRLEY
Alice, wait --

Dial tone. She's gone.

SHIRLEY
(on air)
We lose her?

Gordon nods. The next call comes on the line.

NEW CALLER
Hello, Dr. Shirley, this is Glen
from Evanston, I'm forty-two... Hello?

SHIRLEY
(snapping out of it)
Hi...hi, Glen, what's on your mind?

CUT TO:

EXT. ELM STREET - NIGHT

Shirley, beat, climbs out of a taxi in front of her apart-
ment building. She starts up the steps, then turns to see
Jack's light on.

CUT TO:

JACK'S APARTMENT

He's sitting at his typewriter, typing a rough draft of his
article on Shirley and media psychologist.

We should GLIMPSE THE TOP OF THE PAGE so it's clear what he's typing. His desk is covered with notes, tapes, etc.

Jack stops at the end of a paragraph, gets up and goes into the bathroom to turn on the shower. He walks back in, unbuttoning his shirt. Someone KNOCKS at the door.

JACK

One minute!

He goes and turns off the shower, starts to button up his shirt.

CUT TO:

JACK as he opens his apartment door to see Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Hi, I saw your light on.

JACK

Shirley...

SHIRLEY

I've been trying to call you since Monday. Did you just get back?

Shirley steps into his apartment, takes a look around.

JACK

Shirley, wait a minute --

SHIRLEY

Hey, this isn't so bad, Jack.

(then)

So where have you been?

Shirley sets her keys down on the end table right next to Jack's set of keys. Jack slips back to his desk. As inconspicuously as possible, he tries to cover his notes and papers with magazines and manila folders as they continue talking.

JACK

Out of town... I apologize... It was an emergency. I had to see my brother in Springfield.

(wants to change the subject)
Hey, congratulations, my cab driver said you're going national.

SHIRLEY

You took a cab to Springfield?

JACK
No, I flew and took a cab in from
the airport.

SHIRLEY
Flew, it's only a two hour drive?

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN/MAIN ROOM - LATER

Jack is pouring Budweiser into a couple of beer mugs.
Shirley is sitting in the other room.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
...It's going to get crazier. I have
to do a TV commercial, ads, all sorts
of stuff. They want to have at least
three million listeners the first night.

Jack pauses for a beat then picks up the beer mugs and walks
into the main room. Shirley's sitting in his swivel chair
by his desk.

JACK
I hope you like Budweiser, it's all...

Then he sees the one thing he has forgotten: the page he was
working on is still in the typewriter carriage.

JACK
...I have.

SHIRLEY
That's fine. Thanks. Why don't
you sit down?

She takes the mug from his hand, Jack walks to the other side
of the room trying to draw her away from the typewriter.

Shirley swings around in the chair, props her feet up on
the desk.

SHIRLEY
Jesus, it must be great being a
writer. You gotta problem, you
ju tear up the page and start over.

JACK
Sometimes...sure.

SHIRLEY
I wish I could do that for some of
my callers.

JACK
Must be kind of tough sometimes.

Jack's getting in deeper and deeper, doesn't know how long he can continue this charade.

An awkward pause.

SHIRLEY
I shouldn't have come over, right?

JACK
What do you mean?

SHIRLEY
Jack, I'm not stupid. You're sitting on the other side of the room; you're barely talking... I feel this tension, you know.

She drops her feet down. Now she appears to be looking right at the page in his typewriter.

JACK
(certain she's going to see it)
Shirley, listen --

SHIRLEY
I interrupted your writing?

JACK
No, Shirley, listen --

But suddenly she rises, empties the remaining beer into her mug.

SHIRLEY
What?

The danger gone. He backs down.

JACK
(holds up his mug)
Cheers.

SHIRLEY
(hesitantly)
Cheers.
(taps his glass)
Jack, I just wanted to see you...
that's all.

CUT TO:

THE APARTMENT DOOR - LATER

Jack is opening the door. Shirley is about to leave. She reaches down and picks up the wrong set of keys, knocking the other set on the carpet.

SHIRLEY
Well, I'm glad your brother's okay.

JACK
Sure...he's going to be fine.

It seems like Jack's going to tell her the truth again, but he backs down.

SHIRLEY
It's not your work and it's not me, right?

JACK
I'm just wiped out, that's all, and you surprised me...I'll call you in the morning.

She starts off down the hall and without looking back.

SHIRLEY
I think I better call you!

CUT TO:

JACK closing the door behind him. He walks across the room, yanks the sheet out of the typewriter and tosses it on the desk. He looks out of the window at Shirley crossing the street to her apartment building. Then, he turns and leans back against the window. Doesn't move.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S apartment door as she sticks in the key. It doesn't fit. She tries another key... Realizes she's taken Jack's keys by mistake.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY knocking on Jack's door.

SHIRLEY
(knocks again)
Jack!

Nothing.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY opening the door with Jack's keys. She steps inside.

SHIRLEY
Jack!

She hears the shower running.

CUT TO:

JACK in the shower as he grabs a bottle of shampoo.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY, on her hands and knees looking for her keys. She finds them behind the leg of the end table, but spots something else: AN ACCORDION FILE tucked under the desk with Shirley written in magic marker across the top.

CUT TO:

Jack in the shower, his hair full of shampoo.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY, now sitting at Jack's desk. She's pulled out the file, and discovered everything on Jack's desk including part of the rough draft of the article.

SHIRLEY
(reading softly)

...But the lines between therapy, entertainment and exploitation can easily become blurred. This could not be clearer than in the case of Dr. Shirley, Chicago's 'foremost psychologist' who is not even a licensed doctor, but a thrice divorced dance instructor...(skipping)...How many other Dr. Shirleys are on stations across the country today, peddling their fortune cookie advice to millions of uninformed listeners. The damage that Shirley Kenton and others like her could be inflicting on thousands...

She continues reading to herself.

CUT TO:

THE BATHROOM

As Jack steps out of the shower drying his hair with his towel. Suddenly the door bursts open.

SHIRLEY
You son of a bitch.

And she storms out, slamming the door behind her.

JACK
Shirley!

He quickly wraps his towel around him.

THE APARTMENT

Jack spots the papers on his desk. The apartment door is open -- she's gone.

JACK

Shirley!

Jack grabs his sneakers and slips into them on the run.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT BUILDING

It's begun to snow as Jack in his sneakers and towel scrambles down the steps.

JACK

Shirley, wait!

She sees him coming toward her. She starts to run. Jack, his sneakers slipping on the thin layer of snow covering the sidewalk, runs after her...

He finally catches up to her. She continues walking as fast as she can.

SHIRLEY

(not facing him)

A brother in Springfield, a novelist...
Christ!

JACK

Would you let me try and explain.

SHIRLEY

You think I'm a fraud, you think I'm
a liar. You haven't been straight
with me since the day I met you!

JACK

I was going to tell you.

SHIRLEY

Oh yeah, yeah sure. That's very
convincing.

JACK

Would you please stop for a minute?

He's fallen a few steps behind her; she's really moving.
She dumps over a trash can in his path. Jack hurtles it.

JACK

That's not true about everything
being a lie.

SHIRLEY

I don't want to hear about it, Jack.
I don't want to hear about your
change overs --

JACK

Change ups.

SHIRLEY

...or that book you were supposed to be writing --

JACK

I am writing a book.

SHIRLEY

(stops abruptly)

Bullshit, Jack. Bull-shit. If you were writing a book, you'd be writing a book, not working for the Sun Times. Jesus, Jack, you wouldn't know the truth if it ran over you. And stop following me.

(takes off again)

I'm trying to do something. You might think it's 'idiotic.' You might think it's a joke, but that doesn't give you the right to tear it all down.

(stop abruptly)

And I thought for a minute we might... Jesus, I should've guessed it from the start...

(then)

And stop following me!

She takes off again. Jack stays with her.

JACK

You think I feel good about it!

SHIRLEY

(softly; very angry)

I don't care how you feel about it, Jack.

(stops abruptly)

Just go on, go print that article of yours, Jack. You know, at least I know what I'm trying to do is right.

(starts off; on the verge of tears)

And stop following me!

He does. Shirley disappears around the corner. Jack, furious, picks up a nearby trash can which appears empty, and tosses it against a nearby street light. But there is some spoiled vegetables and fruit in the bottom. They fly out and hit a woman in the leg who is walking her dog.

JACK

(clutching his towel)

I'm sorry.

The woman is scared to say a word to this madman.

JACK
I said I'm sorry!!

She quickly walks off, then breaks into a run. Jack doesn't get it. Hold, then

CUT TO:

THE CHARMET'S COFFEE SHOT - NIGHT

as its hot pink sign flashes on and off. We DROP DOWN to SEE Shirley sitting alone in a window booth reading a letter.

CUT TO:

INSERT A LETTER, bathed in pink light.

...and I don't know who to turn to
anymore. Please help me, Dr. Shirley.
I'm desperate.

Julie Knight
East Gary.

ON SHIRLEY

sitting in the booth. The table is covered with letters -- hundreds of them all pleading for her help. There are a stack of letters that she has written nearby. The WALL CLOCK: 4:05. Even the waitress is asleep.

Shirley pulls out another piece of stationery and starts to respond to the letter.

DISSOLVE TO:

SHIRLEY IN THE BOOTH - DAY

We can't hear what she's saying. But she's on her feet, clearly putting everything she has into it. More determined than ever.

CUT TO:

THE WASHROOM - WLOS

Shirley washing her face with water. Her eyes are puffed up from lack of sleep. She pulls out a vial of dexedrine, unscrews the cap.

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She's at her desk answering more mail.

She glances out the window to see Jack's window below. She yanks the curtains closed, sips her coffee, returns to her letters.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE STUDIO

Shirley on the air. We can't hear what she's saying. She finishes the call. She cues Gordon for the news. Immediately shuts her eyes.

GORDON
(intercom)
Five minutes, Shirley.

She nods, slowly gets up.

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY - WLOS

Shirley on her way back from her break, cigarette in one hand, coffee in the other. Perlman and Alan are walking with her.

SHIRLEY
...The next two days off. Why?

PERLMAN
Shirley, you've jumped up to twelve, fifteen calls an hour. You're still taking callers off the air, staying here till midnight. I want you fresh for the network show.

ALAN
You owe it to yourself.

SHIRLEY
(bit hoarse)
I can't... I'll be fine...

She shoves open the door to the studio with her back and disappears inside.

THE SUN TIMES NEWS ROOM - DAY

Jack is sitting in front of his word processor, lighting another cigarette. There's very little on the screen. He glances at Alex who is sitting nearby feverishly working on a piece at another word processor.

CUMMINGS (O.S.)
Three days left, Jack.

Jack turns to see Cummings, cradling a cup of coffee, standing on the far side of his desk.

JACK

Thanks, I'm aware of that.

CUMMINGS

Monday, nine a.m., it's going to be on my desk, right?

JACK

I don't know, I'm still working on it.

CUMMINGS

It's getting a little late not to know, isn't it?

Jack doesn't respond. Another reporter comes up to Cummings with a problem; the two of them walk off together. Alex stops working, glances up:

ALEX

What do you mean you don't know. What about your trip? Didn't that pan out?

JACK

(irritated)

I said I don't know. Drop it Alex, would you.

ALEX

Hey, I'm the only one in this place that's not betting against you.

Jack glances at him; he doesn't want to discuss it. Without saying another word, Jack gets up, walks past him...

ALEX

Yeah, and good talking to you too, Jack!

...and out the double glass doors.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

Gordon cues Shirley. She's on the air.

SHIRLEY

Hello, this is Dr. Shirley, you're on the air...

(nothing)

Go ahead, you're on the air.

JACK

At least you could return my phone calls.

SHIRLEY

Jack?

(furious)

Jack, is that you!

CUT TO:

A PHONE BOOTH - WELLS STREET

JACK

I have something to tell you, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Get off this program!

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

On Nancy and Gordon -- what's going on?

JACK (V.O.)

Shirley, I want to tell you something.

SHIRLEY

Why don't you put it in the paper,
then we can all read about it.

JACK (V.O.)

(now he's getting angry)
Would you stop being so pig-headed
and listen to me for one minute?

SHIRLEY

Get lost Jack! I hope that's pig-
headed enough!

JACK (V.O.)

You know something, Shirley, the worst
thing about ignorance is its insistency.

Shirley signals Gordon to cut him off. Gordon does.

INSIDE THE PHONE BOOTH

JACK

And let me tell you something else --
hello? -- HELLO!

He realizes he's been cut off. He slams the receiver down.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO

Shirley lights a cigarette, trying to relax.

A promo TAPE, with Shirley's pre-recorded voice advertising her network show is going out over the air.

GORDON
(on intercom)
You all right?

SHIRLEY
(nods; then)
Let's see if we can get as many calls
in as possible on this next segment, okay?

GORDON
Okay, Shirley.

Gordon glances at Nancy -- what's going on?

PROMO TAPE: "...So I hope you'll be listening in to my first network program. That's tomorrow night at five, here on WLOS TALK RADIO 89..."

DISSOLVE TO:

THE WRIGLEY BUILDING - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

There's a small crowd, a TV crew, and a handful of photographers. A BANNER hangs down from the second story: CONGRATULATIONS DR. SHIRLEY/N.B.C. RADIO NETWORK.

A taxi pulls up. Shirley climbs out. She's surprised to see the crowd. Alan hurries up to her.

ALAN
Hi... Come on, we have a few things
to go over upstairs before the broadcast.

Alan takes her by the arm and leads her to the door. A few people in the crowd call out: "Good luck"... "God bless you, Dr. Shirley"... "We love you..."

CUT TO:

THE COFFEE LOUNGE - WLOS

Shirley is having coffee and a cigarette as Alan and Nancy go over the last minute details. There's a speaker on the wall, and, as always, it's WLOS. The NEWS is on.

ALAN
...You'll have ninety seconds less
each half hour because of the extra
spots... There's a new tape lead in,
and, remember, you won't be doing the
station breaks, okay?

SHIRLEY

Sure. Got it.

ON THE RADIO, the tail end of a news story: "...leaped into the Chicago river last night from the LaSalle Street Bridge. The woman, identified as Alice Walker remains...

ALAN

There will be some network people watching from the studio, and let's see...

Shirley isn't listening anymore. She's heard what she thought was Alice's name.

RADIO: "...in critical condition, in coma, in Cook County Hospital. We'll have the weather for you after this message."

ALAN

I think that's about it -- Oh, Nancy's prepared some introductory remarks for you --

(then)

Shirley?

SHIRLEY

(gets up)

I'll meet you in the studio.

ALAN

Where're you going? It's five minutes to air.

But she's gone.

CUT TO:

THE NEWS STUDIO

Where DENNIS DONALDSON, the newscaster is just a about to finish his broadcast.

DONALDSON

...this is Dennis Donaldson for WLOS news, wishing you a happy and a Merry Christmas. Stay tuned for Dr. Shirley coming up next on Talk Radio 89.

He's off. Shirley rushes in.

DONALDSON

(surprised)

Shirley?

SHIRLEY

That story you just read about the woman who fell off the bridge. What was her name?

DONALDSON
 (picks up the copy)
 The one that jumped?... Something
 Walker... Here it is, Alice Walker...
 Why?

SHIRLEY
 Can I see it, please.

She takes the copy from him. Dennis picks up the Sun-Times,
 folds it open to page three.

DONALDSON
 It's in here too, if you're interested.

Shirley takes the newspaper from him.

INSERT: A grainy photo of a woman on a litter, the bridge in
 the background. The caption reads: WOMAN LEAPS FROM LASALLE
 STREET BRIDGE.

DONALDSON
 ...What a way to do it. If you don't
 drown you freeze to death.
 (notes the clock)
 Say, you getter get in there.

Shirley slowly sets the paper down and walks out without say-
 ing a word.

DONALDSON
 (calling after her)
 Good luck!

CUT TO:

SHIRLEY outside the engineering booth. She pauses just long
 enough to make us think she might not go in. Then she opens
 the door.

CUT TO:

INSIDE JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ALEX
 ...Nothing in moderation with you
 is there...

Jack's packing up to leave town for a while. He zips up his
 duffle on the bed. Two suitcases and his typewriter sit by
 the door. Alex is sitting on the desk, finishing a can of
 Budweiser.

ALEX
 ...How long you think you'll stay
 in Montreal?

JACK

I don't know, two months...five months.
Depends on how the writing goes.

ALEX

So I can't sublet the place?
(Jack shakes his head)
You know, I think it's great you hung
it up. So you didn't get the piece.
At least you're through with the paper.

Jack tosses Alex the duffle. He doesn't want to discuss it.

JACK

Take this down would you.

ALEX

Sure Jack... Jesus, lighten up would you.
(Jack glances up at him)
Okay, okay I'm taking the duffle down.
I'll meet you in the car.

CUT TO:

THE ENGINEER'S BOOTH - WLOS

Where card chairs have been set up behind Gordon for the New York executives, Perlman and other station employees. Shirley walks in, trying to hold it together. Alan introduces her to the various executives... They congratulate her, wish her luck... She shakes some hands, then goes into the booth.

INSIDE THE BOOTH

Shirley puts on her headphones. Nancy walks in with Shirley's introductory remarks. Shirley's Theme MUSIC is now on the air.

Nancy walks out. Shirley's POV of everyone watching her on the other side of the glass.

RADIO: "...and now Chicago and the nation's foremost radio psychologist (three women singing a capella) Dr. Shirley."

Gordon cues her. The ON AIR sign flashes. The light at the base of Shirley's mike goes on.

SHIRLEY

Hi, good evening... This is Dr. Shirley.
(glances down at the copy)
First, I want to welcome all of you
new listeners across the country to
the program. As you probably know this
is a very special night for me...
(Pause. Too long a pause)
...because we're now being carried by
fifty-seven affiliates.
(MORE)

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 (in control again)
 I feel extremely privileged and
 flattered to have all of you listening
 in. And I hope soon, you'll be calling
 me. Because without you...

SHIRLEY'S POV of Donaldson, the newscaster as he slips into
 the engineering booth to watch, a newspaper tucked under his
 arm.

SHIRLEY
 ...there wouldn't be any Dr. Shirley...
 program. Also I want to thank some of
 the people who have helped me get here
 tonight.

SHIRLEY'S POV of the crowd, and finally Donaldson, who sets
 the newspaper down on an empty chair.

Shirley sets down the sheet she's been reading, from, picks
 it up, sets it down again.

SHIRLEY
 But before I do...

CUT TO:

INSIDE ALEX'S CAR - NIGHT

Jack's duffle is in the back seat. Alex is inside; the
 car is running. He checks his watch. Honks his horn a
 couple of times for Jack. Flips on the radio, turns the
 dial accidentally catching Shirley's show.

SHIRLY/RADIO
 I think there are some things you
 should know...

CUT TO:

INSIDE JACK'S BUILDING

As Jack steps out of the elevator struggling with the two
 suitcases and his portable typewriter. Alex comes racing in.

ALEX
 Jack, come on, you've got to hear
 this. Dr. Shirley's on.

JACK
 I'm not interested.

ALEX
 Would you just come out to the car and
 listen. You'll be interested.

JACK
Alex, I don't care. I don't want
to hear it.

Alex grabs Jack by the arm, begins hustling him toward the door.

JACK
What are you doing?

Jack has to drop his bags.

ALEX
Forget the bags, I'll come back
for them.

And they disappear out the lobby door.

CUT TO:

THE STUDIO - WLOS

SHIRLEY
...I'm not a doctor. In fact, I
was working here as a receptionist
and before that I was a dance teacher
in a place called Fergus Falls.
(roughly quoting from
Jack's article)
So you see I'm not qualified to really
help you... Maybe I can be funny
sometimes... Maybe I even give you
some tips, I don't know...

ON the guests, watching in disbelief.

SHIRLEY
...But I know that this fortune cookie
advice I've been giving can be pretty
dangerous.
(then)
See, I just tried to help someone.
Someone I thought I had an easy
answer for. She put all her trust
in me and I let her down...

CUT TO:

ALEX'S CAR

As Alex drives up the entrance ramp to the Kennedy express-
way. Jack is beside him, listening to the radio. His lug-
gage in back.

RADIO/SHIRLEY
...Christ, I can't even handle my own
problems, much less any of yours.

CUT TO:

1. A FARMHOUSE - MOLINE, ILLINOIS where a woman has stopped kneading her bread to listen to the radio.

SHIRLEY

...It's not important how all of this happened. It just started...

2. A TEENAGE COUPLE parked at some lovers' lane in Winnetka. They've stopped making out to listen.

SHIRLEY

...and things got going so well and I got so caught up in it...

3. A BUS DRIVER at the wheel of his bus. Listening.

SHIRLEY

...that I guess I forgot that I shouldn't've ever been here in the first place.

4. A FIRE STATION where the firemen have stopped playing pool to listen.

SHIRLEY

I was supposed to be helping you, but I think what I was really doing was asking all of you to help me. ...It was a lousy thing to do.

BACK TO:

THE STUDIO

SHIRLEY

Anyway, I don't know how to make it up to you. I don't think I can... I -- I just can't do this anymore. Thanks for listening. This is Shirley, talk radio 89. Goodnight...

She sets her headphones down.

CUT TO:

THE ENGINEERING BOOTH

Everyone is talking at once. Shirley rushes past them into the hall.

PERLMAN

Shirley, come back here!

(to Alan)

Jesus, we're still on the air.

CUT TO:

THE HALLWAY

Alan runs out. Shirley's gone.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE WRIGLEY BUILDING

It has begun to snow. Shirley is waiting for the light to change at the curb. Alan races out the revolving door and catches up to her.

ALAN

Do you have any idea of what you're doing? How many listeners are listening?!

SHIRLEY

I'm not going back, Alan.

ALAN

You can't do this to us.

Shirley breaks away from him and starts across the street AGAINST the light. A phalanx of traffic charges toward her.

ALAN

(starts after her)

Shirley!

But the traffic forces him back to the curb. HORNS BLAST, BRAKES SCREECH... People shout at her to get out of the way. Shirley scrambles to the far side of the street, narrowly avoiding being hit. She's broken one of her heels.

ON ALAN, as the traffic finally clears. He starts across the street, but it's too late: she's vanished.

CUT TO:

COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL

Shirley, holding her broken heel in one hand is peering through the glass at Alice, in a coma, in the intensive care unit.

A NURSE hurries toward her.

NURSE

Miss, you're not allowed in here.

SHIRLEY

Is she going to be all right.

The Nurse takes her by the arm.

NURSE

You're not permitted in here, now.

SHIRLEY

Is she going to be all right!

NURSE

I don't know...I'm sorry...

INSIDE ALEX'S CAR - KENNEDY EXPRESSWAY

As they sweep beneath the "O'Hare Airport right lane" sign.
Jack and Alex are still listening to the broadcast.

RADIO

...We apologize for the interruption.
We expect Dr. Shirley to be back with
us shortly. Please stay with us.

ALEX

I don't believe it. What a con.

JACK

(softly)

She didn't have to do that.

ALEX

(beat)

What do you mean?... Jack, you didn't
have any of this, did you?

Jack doesn't answer. Alex glances over at him. It's written
all over Jack's face.

ALEX

(disbelief)

You shmuck...

JACK

Stop the car, Alex.

ALEX

Why?

JACK

You're getting out.

ALEX

(laughs)

What are you talking about? We're
two minutes from the airport. It's
my car.

CUT TO:

JACK shoving Alex out of the car on side of the expressway.

ALEX

Jack, it's my God Damn car!

Jack pulls the door shut, pulls out onto the expressway leaving Alex standing in the snow.

CUT TO:

A NORTH SIDE BAR

Shirley is the only one sitting at the bar. An elderly couple sit in one of the booths. There's a Christmas tree in one corner. Shirley's already had too much to drink.

SHIRLEY

(to bartender)

I want another.

BARTENDER

Another what?

SHIRLEY

What difference does it make?

BARTENDER

Don't you think you've had enough already?

SHIRLEY

Are you kidding?

CUT TO:

THE WLOS RECEPTION AREA

An elderly GUARD is trying to prevent Jack from getting into the station. He has one of his arms around Jack's chest.

GUARD

...You can't come in here!

Jack gives up. Raises his hands to surrender.

JACK

(holding up his hands)

All right, okay, take it easy, you win.

Soon as the Guard relaxes his grip, Jack slips around him, and hurries down the corridor. The Guard runs after him.

INSIDE PERLMAN'S OFFICE

Nancy, Alan, Perlman, Dennis Donaldson, plus several network people are discussing what to do.

PERLMAN

...Let's stop talking about suing her. I'm the one to blame... I should've never allowed it to happen.

Jack comes through the door, the Guard has one arm wrapped around him.

GUARD

I'm sorry, I'll get him out of here.

JACK

Where is she?

Jack pulls the guard along behind him as he walks toward Perlman's desk.

PERLMAN

Who are you?

ALAN

It's okay, let him go, Tom. He's a friend of hers.

The Guard lets go.

ALAN

We don't know where she is. She just took off. The police have a dozen cars out looking for her... She never even went home.

PERLMAN

Do you have any idea where she might've gone?

JACK

No... I thought you would. What happened?

ALAN

We don't know. Everthing seemed fine, then she just snapped.

DONALDSON

You know, just before air time she came to my office and had to find out about some story I'd just read. It seemed very important to her.

JACK

What was the story about?

CUT TO:

COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL

Jack is being shoved out of the intensive care unit by the SAME Nurse who kicked Shirley out earlier.

NURSE

...Why do all you crazies come out
on the holidays?

JACK

Look, the other woman that was here
earlier, didn't she say anything at
all about where she was going?

NURSE

Sure. And she gave me her name,
address, and even asked about you.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR

As the Bartender turns off the lights. Shirley polishes off
yet another drink.

SHIRLEY

...Closing time? But it's only --
(she checks her wrist, but
she's not wearing a wristwatch)
...only -- What time is it?

BARTENDER

Lady, I'm closing up on account of
the holidays. I want to go home.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE BAR - LASALLE STREET

The Bartender pulls the door shut behind Shirley. The sign
in the window flickers out. Shirley, holding her broken heel
in one hand, leans back against the door. The snow clings
to her hair and the shoulder of her coat.

She rubs her bleary, booze-soaked eyes, then spots something
through the swirling snow -- the LaSalle Street bridge four
blocks away. She pushes off the door and heads toward the
bridge.

CUT TO:

INT. A GAS STATION

An ATTENDANT is filling Jack's tank outside.

He's getting a coffee from a vending machine. The radio is
on and tuned to WLOS:

RADIO/PERLMAN

...Well thanks for the call, Mike.
And thanks to thousands of you who
have called in to express your concern
for Shirley. I'm afraid we don't have
any answer for you yet, except that we
hope to locate her soon... Go ahead,
you're on the air.

The Attendant walks in.

ATTENDANT

(to Jack)

That'll be eleven seventy-five.

CALLER (O.S.)

Hi, this is Regina from Glen Elyn.
I was thinking maybe we could do a
little something for Shirley for once.

PERLMAN (O.S.)

What do you have in mind, Regina?

REGINA (O.S.)

Remember how she used to talk about
honking your own horn and all that...
Well maybe we could all honk our horns --
I mean our car horns -- for her tonight
to show her we care about her. You know
at the same time. Like eleven o'clock
or something.

PERLMAN (O.S.)

(not taking it seriously)

Honk your horn for Shirley tonight at
eleven if you care about her... Sure...
Thanks a lot for the call, Regina.

JACK

(cynically)

Great, honk your horn for Shirley...
That's a big help...

He takes his change. Walks out. He's never going to find her.

CUT TO:

JACK as he is about to get into his car. Across the street
he spots -- A DISCOUNT APPLIANCE STORE with a half dozen TVs
in the window all tuned to the same station. There's a tape
of Alice being pulled out of the river... Then a final shot of
the ambulance driving across the LaSalle Street Bridge.
HOLD on Jack, then

CUT TO:

A BLACK HIGH HEEL

as it drops into the Chicago River. ON SHIRLEY, standing on the edge of the LaSalle Street Bridge.

LASALLE STREET

Jack's VW fishtailing down the snow covered street.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

Where Shirley is precariously leaning against a girder, on the edge of the bridge. The snow swirls around her. HER POV of the turbulent river below. She's depressed enough and drunk enough to let herself fall in.

JACK (O.S.)

I don't believe it... Now what are you doing?

Shirley looks up to see Jack standing a dozen yards behind her, his hands stuffed in his coat pockets.

SHIRLEY

What are you doing here!

JACK

(exasperated)

Don't tell me you're thinking about jumping?

SHIRLEY

I don't need your advice... Mr.... Mr. Ryder...

JACK

Sure, sure go ahead -- it's none of my business.

(then)

I'm leaving town. I just stopped by to give you this.

He holds out a bulging accordion file.

JACK

It's the article, the tapes, everything. I was trying to tell you on the phone but you were too busy telling me to get lost. I quit my job.

(quickly)

Not because of you. Don't get any ideas... I just realized I'd never finish my novel if I stayed on.

She ignores the file.

JACK

Look, if you don't want it...

He tosses it off the bridge. It splashes into the river.

SHIRLEY

Why'd you change your mind now? You don't seem to know what you want to do, do you, Jack? What about all the harm I could cause?

JACK

What happened to Alice Walker is a damn shame, Shirley... But it's not your fault.

SHIRLEY

No, that's the one thing you were right about. I should've never done it...any of it.

JACK

You're right. Go ahead, Swan Dive... Double Gainer... But how is that going to help some teenage girl in Rock Island when she wakes up tomorrow and hears that Shirley, the woman she believed in all this time has, well...

(points down at the river)

I think it's pretty selfish.

(quickly)

Of course it's none of my business.

(nothing from Shirley)

You know that little number you pulled on the radio tonight took a lot of guts.

(pause)

Shirley, that person on the radio is you. Whether you're a doctor, a dentist, or a dance teacher, it doesn't make a difference to those people out there... Maybe all you do is make it easier for a few of them to get through another day, another night. Maybe that's it. But that's a helluva lot more than a lot of other people.

(quickly)

Of course it's none of my business.

We HEAR a stray car HORN in the distance. Followed quickly by another then another. Jack glances at his watch: 10:59.

SHIRLEY

What'd you really come for, Jack? The big wrap up to the Shirley Kenton story?

JACK

There you go again. You're really starting to piss me off, you know that?

(then)

We both deceived each other once. I'd consider us even... People make mistakes, Shirley.

Now hundreds of HORNS are wailing in the stormy night air. It grows louder by the second.

SHIRLEY

What's going on?

JACK

Just stay right there. I want you to hear something.

Jack takes off.

SHIRLEY

What are you doing?

He disappears in the swirling snow...

Moments later he pulls his car up alongside her, opens the door and turns up his radio full blast. It seems like every HORN in the city is honking.

PERLMAN/RADIO

It's eleven o'clock and if you're not honking your horn for Shirley you should be.

(sounding surprised himself)

Jesus, Gordon, it sounds like the whole damn city is honking. This is great.

SHIRLEY

This is crazy... They're honking for me?

JACK

Someone called in. They said 'if you care about Shirley the way she has always cared about you,' you should honk your horn at eleven tonight.

(then)

I wouldn't let it go to your head.

A smile begins to creep across Shirley's face. Jack switches off the radio. He slides out of the car, his elbow accidentally tapping his horn. BEEP.

JACK

It was an accident.

They're facing each other for the first time. Shirley's still precariously standing on the edge of the bridge.

JACK
Oh Christ, give me your hand.

SHIRLEY
(hard to hear over the
din of horns)
What!

JACK
Your hand!

Jack grabs her hand and pulls her away from the edge of the bridge. She stumbles into his arms.

JACK
Besides...

SHIRLEY
Besides what?!

JACK
It's too late to leave tonight anyway!

The HORNS CONTINUE TO BLARE. Jack kisses her.

Suddenly a searchlight hits them in the face.

POLICE (O.S.)
(bullhorn)
Don't jump!

The light is coming from a police boat on the river below.

SHIRLEY
(breaking off the kiss)
What, are you crazy!

Hold, then

DISSOLVE TO:

THE ON THE AIR SIGN as it flashes on.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
Hi, Hi...it's Shirley.

DROP DOWN to SEE Shirley at her microphone. Several days have passed. The bags are gone from her eyes. She's wearing her old beat up clothes: jeans and a sweatshirt. Her hair is the way it was when she first arrived in Chicago.

SHIRLEY

...I want to say first off get well to Alice Walker who has just been moved out of Intensive Care at Cook County. We're all pullin' for you, Alice. And I want to thank all of you for those horns. That was great,

(smiles)

...really crazy, but great...

She glances up to see Jack standing on the other side of the glass. He's rolling his hands over one another -- "get on with it."

SHIRLEY

(grinning)

I guess I'm still not very good at giving speeches... Nancy, who's up first?

Perlman and Alan are standing next to Gordon, pleased to see her back on the air.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE WRIGLEY BUILDING - NIGHT

One window on the top floor is lit. The rest of the building is dark.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

...She really said that, Carol?

We begin to PULL BACK...

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

...Are you kidding me?

DISSOLVE TO:

THE WRIGLEY BUILDING

from overhead...as we climb higher and higher until it disappears into the mosaic of city lights.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)

This is Shirley, please...

BLACK SCREEN:

SHIRLEY

...call me.

THE END